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# MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS

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# MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS

BY

R. W. CHURCH

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# NOTICE

THE present volumes contain a number of papers which have already appeared in periodicals, and some of them also in a separate form. One on St. Anselm was recast for Macmillan's Sunday Library from two articles contributed to the *British Critic* in 1843. The Essay on Dante appeared in the *Christian Remembrancer* of January 1850, and was reprinted in a volume of Essays and Reviews (1854), and afterwards separately. The papers on Brittany and the Early Ottomans also appeared first in the *Christian Remembrancer*, 1846 and 1855; that on Montaigne in the *Oxford Essays* of 1857; those on Cassiodorus and the Letters of Gregory the Great in the *Church Quarterly*, 1880 and 1881. The notice on Wordsworth was written for Mr. Humphry Ward's *English Poets* (1880). The paper on *Sordello* came out in *Macmillan's Magazine* for February 1887. The

essays on Bacon and Spenser were written for the Series of *English Men of Letters*, edited by Mr. John Morley.

Distance from books and other reasons have prevented me from attempting any changes. But I do not forget how much has been written about St. Anselm by Dean Hook, Mr. Freeman, and Mr. Rule; and how a whole literature has grown up about Dante in Germany, Italy, and England, since I first ventured to write about him in 1850.

R. W. C.

COSTABELLE, HYÈRES,
*Feb.* 1888.

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# THE ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

[1857]

MONTAIGNE is one of those writers who have first surprised and shocked their age, and then become its most popular author. He was the first to try a very great, and a very simple, experiment. The essay, in its informality and unceremoniousness, in its variety of shape, from the carefully-organised whole to the sketch, the fragment, the desultory playing about a subject or tentative approach to it, in its readiness to adapt itself to every purpose, is characteristic of the literature that has grown up since the revival of learning. And that most convenient form of writing, in which so much has been said that could have been said, or at least would have been said, in no other way—so congenial especially to the elastic and popular spirit of the literature of England and France —is due, in its historical beginning, to Montaigne. In an age of stiffness, when nobody ventured to publish without the airs and parade of a master by profession, he bethought himself of writing down, without any restriction as to subject or manner, the results of his experience of life, and trying whether,

among readers of books, sympathy with the matter would overweigh the effect of an unwonted and home-spun form—of the startling neglect of all the rules of art and all the show of system. To us it seems a very obvious thought. But in those days it was a new one; and Montaigne was the first who had the courage to condescend to it—to offer to the world merely his "attempts," instead of successes and finished works. The experiment first astonished people, and then delighted them. And it was the first step in a great revolution in the fashions and liberties of writing.

The essay has become something very different since. In its combination of perfect ease and unassuming frankness with severity of plan and the most artistic polish, it goes far beyond Montaigne's rude and primitive model. But he is the legitimate ancestor of all that mass of literature which bears the essay stamp. And it was in the interest of all—historians, philosophers, orators, as well as of writers less ambitious in their aims—that he set the example of breaking through the ceremoniousness of literature, and ventured to print, in the idiom of common life, on grave themes and in a serious spirit. The writers who, from this time forward, were emboldened to follow the promptings of their taste and genius in the choice of materials and the shaping of their expressions, owe a great deal to their hardy pioneer, the old Gascon gentleman who first vindicated for prose the liberty of unscholastic writing, of unshackled arrange-

ment and popular language,—the earliest master, in modern philosophy, of the unconstrained, the familiar, the discursive.

In his own day Montaigne had special merits, which may perhaps have thrown into the shade those of a more enduring character, and which would certainly make a much deeper impression then than now. In a learned age, and himself a scholar, he was one of the first links between ancient learning and modern thought and self-knowledge. Use and time have made us familiar with the intimate interweaving of classical literature with our own. Its instances and sentiments have nothing antique or strange to us; we recognise in it tastes and associations which are all our own; we understand the moral and political experience of its writers from our own; their words sound to us as modern as if they were coined yesterday. But the fusion had still to be made, in Montaigne's day, between the ancient and modern world of thought. Learning—the possession of the treasured relics of the ancients—was exclusive, jealous, self-sufficient, uncommunicative. Scholars felt that they had a prize in their hands, and valued themselves on their privilege; but the best of them were at a loss how to apply it to modern uses; while to the herd it was merely a means of rising in the world, or of making themselves greater fools than they would have done without it. The public looked on and admired, but had hardly yet come to feel that those classic names belonged to men of flesh and blood like

themselves, or that those sonorous quotations for which such credit was taken by orators and preachers, were but the echo of an experience like their own. Montaigne was one of the first who threw off the *donnishness* of erudition. He did so by his merciless mockery of the pedantry of his day; and much more so by bringing the thoughts of the ancients "home to the business and bosoms" of modern men, and by associating what had looked so dignified, distant, and shadowy with the homely sense and well-known realities of everyday life. He cited a saying of Plutarch or Seneca to show how it tallied with what everybody was thinking or saying still. He quoted a passage of Lucretius not because it was Latin or poetry, but because it touched with such exquisite simplicity and truth some deep chord of feeling in the heart of both ploughboys and courtiers. He quoted a great deal too much, indeed, as he himself admits,[1] partly from fashion, partly for idle pastime; it may, perhaps, be added, because the sage of the tower of Montaigne was not quite proof himself against the vanity of displaying his reading. Yet that reading was displayed, as it had not been before, in close union with a keen study and knowledge of living men, with the freshness and vigour of new observation, with a peculiar and subtle fashion of dissecting and describing self. He pointed out to

[1] L. iii. c. 12, p. 400. The references to *pages* are to the edition of Victor Leclerc. Paris, 1844. 3 vols. The other references are to *book* and *chapter*.

scholars that they would understand their own books better if they conceived of their subjects in a broader and more natural way, by the help of an imagination enlivened and enlightened by the sympathies and truths of actual life; if they thought of the great men of old not as stiffly-moulded and conventional examples of certain virtues or vices, but as endued with the same individuality, the same variety and fluctuation and obscure uncertainty of character, as they saw around themselves; if they studied their systems and institutions not as matters beyond criticism, final and absolute in themselves, not with a cramped and servile assiduity, which never dreams of stirring beyond the letter of its text for illustration or inquiry, and is content with the investigation of words and the marshalling of authorities,—but as the incomplete results of problems whose interest is still as deeply felt as ever, to be pieced on or placed side by side, by an intelligent and comprehensive estimate of them, with our own solutions of the same questions. And to the unlearned readers of the vulgar tongue he pointed out that that learning of which so much was said, but which its air, profundity, and perfection seemed to exclude from the possession of the multitude, was but the record, in ages past, of the very thoughts and weaknesses and common sense with which the multitude are so familiar; that the great people, over whose names and deeds the learned pored and commented, were worth knowing about, not because they were ancient, but because they were

really remarkable men; that their words might be cast in a nobler or more refined mould than those of the day, but that the subjects of them were the same. His philosophy was one which needed no learning to understand; yet he reminds his reader at every turn that it is but the application, the expansion, the verification of what he had read in his favourite ancients.

This identifying of classical with modern thought and feeling would be no small recommendation in an age when classical studies were so valued, and when the attempt was new. But besides this, the age was just ripe for some reaction from the tyrannical domination of the classical taste; and Montaigne's writings embodied that reaction. He opened people's eyes to the fact that there was another and even a wider and more fruitful field open for students than the languages and remains of classical antiquity; that even for the highest capacity and most intense application, the most excellent writings about man are not so worthy an object as man himself. He was able to discern, and to make others discern, how much of rich and novel interest there was in a record of the ways, and the real thoughts on small matters and great, of a single average man, a man of the present time, taken in his ordinary aspect—"*à son à touts les jours;*"[1] what a curious study it was to discover the difference and, at the same time, the likeness between him and those who read about him—to compare the hues and shades and folds of his character with theirs. Two

[1] ii. c. 10, p. 566; c. 29, p. 422.

modes of treating human nature had been in vogue among those of his contemporaries who had written books or made set speeches about it: the dignified, and the satirical. Moralists and politicians had looked at it on its public side and general outlines, and had discoursed, in a high-raised strain, of aspects of it that were partial, abstract, and not always like life. The satirist had looked at real life, but only in its worst and vilest form, or with exaggerated and coarse mockery. Montaigne took people into a sphere of thought that they were not accustomed to, at least in books. He took them into real life, but without the set purpose of raising a laugh. He took them into its minutest details and most common circumstances, not indeed without humour and irony, but in the gravest earnest, as a subject more strange, and awful, and full of all the sources of wonder and curiosity, than that abstract human nature whose qualities and virtues and springs of action moral philosophers had tried so hard to number and define and classify. In the character that seemed so completely of one piece, he led men to contemplate the irregularities and exceptions, the various counter-currents of feeling and principle ebbing and flowing within its apparent uniformity. He contrasted the life of special occasions and public show with the life that works on in private, in the ordinary hours, when the strain is taken off, and the springs of the character are relaxed to their average force. From the state and circumstance of those who make a figure in the

great world, or in each of its included little worlds—from the ceremony and glitter of the court, the ermine and terrors of the magistrate, the authority of the scholar—he elicited the men themselves, necessarily in more than half their lives homely, fallible, unstrung, undignified, often as full of commonplace or of unreason as those uninitiated lookers-on whose imaginations they so awed and imposed upon. He took people into the real thoughts that pass through a man's mind while he is writing his book or exercising his public function—very distinct thoughts from those with which he meets and converses with the world outside. The mine which he opened for his contemporaries has been diligently worked ever since, and is not yet worked out; and we know enough of the intense interest which is created by any new and successful attempt to pierce into the truths of life, to be able to understand the effect produced when Montaigne showed that what everybody was noticing and talking about was also worth writing about.

Two more circumstances may be noticed as having told in favour of the *Essais* in the age when they appeared. One is their singularly rich and vigorous language. Montaigne was one of the discoverers of the genius and powers of the French language. He had feeling and sagacity to see that these were to be found in the speech of common life, "the subsoil of the language."[1] "I refuse no phrase," he says, "of

[1] iii. c. 5, p. 131 ; i. c. 25, p. 210.

those which run in the French streets,"—"puisse je ne me servir que de mots qui servent aux halles à Paris." And with admirable good sense he describes the peculiar character and wants of the French of his day, and points out the way in which a language ought to look for improvement and enrichment through new force given by vigorous thought to common words.

Le maniement et employte des beaux esprits donne prix à la langue ; non pas l'innovant, tant, comme la remplissant de plus vigoreux et divers services, l'estirant et ployant ; ils n'y apportent point de mots, mais ils enrichissent les leurs, appesantissent et enfoncent leur signification et leur usage, luy apprennent des mouvements inaccoutumez, mais prudemment et ingenieusement. Et combien peu cela soit donné à touts, il se veoid par tant d'escrivains françois de ce siecle ; ils sont assez hardis et desdaigneux, pour ne suyvre pas la route commune ; mais faulte d'invention et de discretion les perd ; il ne s'y veoid qu'une miserable affectation d'estrangeté, des desguisements froids et absurdes, qui, au lieu d'eslever, abbattent la matiere : pourveu qu'ils se gorgiasent en la nouvelleté, il ne leur chault de l'efficace : pour saisir un nouveau mot, ils quittent l'ordinaire, souvent plus fort et plus nerveux.

En nostre langage ie treuve assez d'estoffe, mais un peu faulte de façon : car il n'est rien qu'on ne feist du iargon de nos chasses et de nostre guerre, qui est un genereux terrain à emprunter ; et les formes de parler, comme les herbes, s'amendent et fortifient en les transplantant. Je le treuve suffisamment abondant, mais non pas maniant et vigoreux suffisamment ; il succombe ordinairement à une puissante conception : si vous allez tendu, vous sentez souvent qu'il languit sous vous, et fleschit ; et qu'à son default le latin se presente au secours, et le grec à d'aultres. D'aulcuns de ces mots que je viens

de trier, nous en apperçevons plus malayseement l'energie, d'autant que l'usage et la frequence nous en ont aulcunement avily et rendu vulgaire la grace ; comme en nostre commun, il s'y rencontre des phrases excellentes, et des metaphores, desquelles la beauté flestrit de vieillesse, et la couleur s'est ternie par maniement trop ordinaire : mais cela n'oste rien du goust à ceulx qui ont bon nez, ny ne desroge à la gloire de ces anciens aucteurs qui, comme il est vraysemblable, meirent premierement ces mots en ce lustre [1] (iii. c. 5).

And after laughing at "fools, who will go a quarter of a league out of their way to run after a fine word," he lays down his own taste and aim in style :—

Aux rebours, c'est aux paroles à servir et à suyvre ; et que le gascon y arrive, si le français n'y peut aller. Je

[1] The handling and utterance of fine wits is that which sets off a language ; not so much by innovating it, as by putting it to more vigorous and various service, by straining, bending, and adapting ; they do not create words, but they enrich their own, and give them weight and signification by the uses they put them to, and teach them unwonted motions, but withal ingeniously and discreetly. And how little this talent is given to all, is manifest by the many French scribblers of this age ; they are bold and proud enough not to follow the common road, but they lose their way for want of invention and discretion. There is nothing seen in their writings but a wretched affectation of a strange new style, with cold and absurd disguises, which, instead of elevating, depresses the matter ; provided they can but trick up their style with fine new words, they care not what they signify ; and to bring in a new word by the head and shoulders, they leave out the old one, very often more sinewy and significant than the other.

There is stuff enough in our language, but there is a defect in fashioning it ; for there is nothing that might not be made out of our terms of hunting and war, which is a fruitful soil to

veux que les choses surmontent, et qu'elles remplissent de façon l'imagination de celuy qui escoute, qu'il n'aye aulcune souvenance des mots. Le parler que j'ayme, c'est un parler simple et naïf, tel sur le papier que sur la bouche ; un parler succulent et nerveux, court et serré ; non tant delicat et peigné, comme vehement et brusque :

Hæc demum sapiet dictio quæ feriet :

plustost difficile qu'ennuyeux ; esloigné d'affectation ; desreglé, descousu, et hardy ; chasque loppin y face son corps ; non pedantesque, non fratesque, non plaideresque, mais plustost soldatesque, comme Suetone appelle celuy de Julius Cesar ; *et si* (he adds, with true Montaignesque candour), *et si, je ne sens pas bien pour quoy il l'en appelle*[1] (i. c. 25).

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borrow from : and the forms of speaking, like herbs, improve and grow stronger by being transplanted. I find it sufficiently abounding, but not sufficiently pliable and vigorous ; it quails under a powerful conception : if you would maintain the dignity of your style, you will oft perceive it to flag and languish under you, and there Latin steps in to its relief, as Greek does to other languages. Of some of the words I have picked out for my own use, we do not easily discern the energy, by reason that the frequent use of them has in some sort debased their beauty, and rendered it common : as in our ordinary language, there are several excellent phrases and metaphors to be met with, of which the beauty is withered by age, and the colour is sullied by too common handling ; but that takes nothing from the relish to an understanding man : neither does it derogate from the glory of those ancient authors who, 'tis likely, first brought those words into that lustre.[2]

[1] 'Tis for words to serve and to follow us ; and let Gascon come in play where French will not do. I would have things so possess the imagination of him that hears that he should have something else to do than to think of words. The way of speak-

[2] This, and most of the following English extracts, are taken from Hazlitt's recast of the version of Charles Cotton, 1865.

In eliciting the powers of his mother tongue, Montaigne was to the sixteenth century what Pascal was to the seventeenth. In Montaigne the clear, easy, well-proportioned march of the language had not yet come. He does not yet verify the adage, "Tout ce qui n'est pas clair n'est pas Français." It was for Pascal to bring to perfection that transparency of phrase and harmonious simplicity of structure which make good French prose so exquisitely graceful and so admirable an instrument of expression. But already in Montaigne the elements of its beauty and strength were present, in new and luxuriant abundance, though wanting severe pruning, and not yet moving with smooth and unembarrassed play among themselves. Periods are cumbrous and involved; epithets are inartificially accumulated on one another; but single sentences are clear and sharp and bold, and words are varied, precise, and choice, full of delicate shades of meaning and association, called up with happy skill or happier carelessness from unexpected quarters and transferred to new uses, all witnessing

ing that I love is natural and plain, as well in writing as speaking, and a sinewy and significant way of expressing one's self, short and pithy, and not so elegant and artificial as prompt and vehement:—

Hæc demum sapiet dictio, quæ feriet.
"The language which strikes the mind will please it."

Rather hard than harsh, free from affectation; irregular, incontinuous, and bold, where every piece makes up an entire body: not like a pedant, a preacher, or a pleader, but rather a soldier-like style, as Suetonius calls that of Julius Cæsar; and yet I see no reason why he should call it so.

to the living copiousness, the felicitous invention, the masculine judgment of one of the master craftsmen of language. Frenchmen were beginning to be ambitious of achievements for their common tongue, and jealous of its honour; and they had never yet seen it attempt so boldly and speak so well.

This was one thing; the other was the tone of easy and indulgent gaiety which pervaded the *Essais*. His way of being serious and yet sporting with his seriousness, suited well his countrymen's temper; it was familiar to them in conversation, but new to them in books. And the times in which he wrote were times when the novelty must have been welcome. It must have been a relief in the days of the League to meet with something which spoke of the present, yet was neither a record of public miseries and crimes, nor a book of fierce controversy, of insolent and false statecraft, or of scurrilous and irritating satire. It must have been refreshing to turn from the gloom and despair of society, and the frantic wickedness and pompous hypocrisy which ruled and brooded over it, to the frank and natural discourse of a man whose humour, buoyant and playful, was proof against the melancholy and stiffness of the times; who could talk pregnantly on public interests and the great themes of philosophy, and could also range widely and pleasantly over homelier and lighter subjects; who was not above inditing chapters on "Coaches," on "Thumbs," on "Smells;" who could enter with zest and sedateness, with imperturbable equanimity

and solemn irony, into his own mental and bodily peculiarities, his household ethics, his domestic customs, his tastes, and sensations, and disorders; who, feeling deeply the greatness and solemnity of human life, was also ever ready to amuse himself with its littlenesses, its incongruities, its ludicrous aspects; who could laugh so heartily at pedants, and declaim with such vehement sarcasm and half in earnest against doctors. But unhappily it was not only the quaint humour, the tranquil cheerfulness, the unrestrained open-hearted gossip of Montaigne's writings, which recommended them to that age. They had other seasoning still more to its taste. They are stained and deformed throughout by unabashed and deliberate filthiness of language, which was but too congenial to the deep corruption and profligacy of the French society of the time. Montaigne is ever ready with a foul illustration, or shameful fragment of ancient indecency. Some of his most striking and truthful strains of reflection are broken in upon and spoilt by a gratuitous wandering after some impure allusion. We read on with admiration and delight, till some sentence stops us—utterly out of place, and inserted as if for mockery—which turns every other feeling into indignation and disgust. There is no excuse to be made for Montaigne's grossness. He is not hurried into it by anything in his subject. There is not even the pretence of joke in it. It was not the fault of a young man. Nor is it the mere broad speaking of an unrefined age. It is the habit and

predilection of his mind, when he was long past forty. He admits that it goes beyond the ordinary licence of the time; he considers about it, and on consideration maintains and defends it. And, as Mr. Hallam has observed, it is worse in the essays of his last years than in his earlier ones. It was indulged in because such thoughts and language were to his liking; and doubtless they were also to the liking of his readers. Among the many bitter and sarcastic things which he says of his own generation, there is none worse than the cynical sneer with which he appeals to their conscience whether they will not read with as much pleasure as he has written; and the sneer seems justified when we recollect that the *Essais* were meant to be read by ladies, that several of them were addressed to ladies, and that it was a lady, an unmarried lady of good reputation, who was their first editor and champion.

If this had been all that could be said for Montaigne, or against him, he would probably by this time have been almost forgotten, like so many of his day, whose influence, considerable at the moment, was so mixed a one on literature; who contributed to refine but also to corrupt it; who helped to transfuse into it the force, the grace, the simplicity, the free march of the classic authors, but their licentiousness as well. But Montaigne was something beyond this. He was one of the few who carve out for themselves a path for their thoughts through the common and well-worn—often worn-out and confused—tracks of

speech and opinion. What has given a permanent interest to Montaigne's writings is the philosophy interwoven with them; his views of man and of life, and his way of expressing them; and with them, the description which he has left us of himself—so boldly and resolutely planned, so curiously, and with such humorous and unflattering minuteness, carried out.

A man who has written well, though it may be partially, on the great commonplace and mystery of human life, is not likely to be forgotten. The subject is so great and so dear to us, and yet sunk so universally in triviality and untruth by faculties too unfaithful or too feeble for its vastness, that the clear ring of words, which have once spoken keenly and true of it, is hardly to be lost, even by distance of time and the confusion of altering tastes and fashions. It is too rare, and touches us too deeply, to be lightly parted with. Montaigne has many faults—it would be difficult, perhaps, to mention a writer of name who has more, and some of them are heavy ones; but he has this excellence, that he is so wide and so real. His views of life present ample matter for exception, both as to what they contain and what they do not. But he has ranged widely, and cast a large glance on the world, in order to form them; and what came under his eye, was seized and expressed with a daring and intense reality of thought and word which belongs only to minds of high temper and force.

"Les belles âmes," he says, "ce sont les âmes universelles, ouvertes, prestes à tout, sinon instruictes,

au moins instruisables."[1] He disclaims for himself all right to be classed with them. But here was the idea of excellence which his own mind longed after and sought, and in part really exhibited. Elastic and versatile, he had his sympathies and his interest everywhere; and his insight pierced through the outward husk of things—through all formal and conventional representations of a subject—through all refinements and ingenuities with which the intellect played and amused itself on its surface, down to its root and core. His mind was singularly an open one. His thoughts were large, rather than deep; yet he had a depth of his own. There is the depth of the patient, balancing, order-working mind: this he had not. But there is also the depth of the seeing eye and hearing ear: this he had, as poets and artists have it. His depth was not that of tracing and verifying the hidden relations which secretly bind together distant truths, but that of discriminating the real marks and features of what was open to the sight of all, though others had missed them there,—of putting his finger exactly on the feeling which was genuine and natural, and disentangling it from others with which it had been confused; of recognising boldly and widely, though he could not explain or reconcile, the opposite sides and unaccountable changes, the inconsistencies and contradictions, which mark both our manifold nature and the laws of our condition. It was a depth not of the analyst or the theoriser, but of the painter, whose

[1] ii. c. 17, p. 351.

eyes unravel and ascertain better than those of other men, the *appearances* of things—whose depth lies in the cunning penetration with which he seizes the fleeting play of expression, or dives into the purple shadows of the mountain, or fathoms and masters the harmony of the lights of the sky; not the depth which dissects the passions, or methodises the laws of optics or geology. As the world passes in review before him, either mirrored in the history of past times, or unfolding itself in the events of the present, Montaigne constructs no system out of it; he troubles himself with no hypothesis, scarcely with a creed to explain it; but he records its phenomena, he generalises his experience with a large and sympathetic, yet discriminating boldness, he enters with all his heart into whatever presents itself. Keenly sensitive to impressions, and a keen questioner of them as well, he is abundant and varied in what he relates, and distinct and forcible in relating. His descriptions are written from the life, unencumbered by any confusion of irrelevant circumstances, unfettered by trivial and second-hand ways of speaking. He is a large and original contributor, not to a scientific knowledge, but to the natural history of man. And this, indeed, is his declared purpose. "Nous autres naturalistes,"[1] is his profession; and he repeats more than once his protestation—"Je n'enseigne point: je raconte."

Montaigne's peg for hanging his philosophy upon was himself:—

[1] iii. c. 12, p. 401; iii. c. 2, p. 26.

Les aultres forment l'homme (he says) *je le recite;* et en represente un particulier, bien mal formé, et lequel si j'avois à façonner de nouveau, je ferois vrayement bien aultre qu'il n'est : meshuy, c'est faict. . . . Je propose une vie basse et sans lustre ; c'est tout un ; on attache aussi bien toute la philosophie morale à une vie populaire et privee, qu'à une vie de plus riche estoffe ; chasque homme porte la forme entiere de l'humaine condition. Les aucteurs se communiquent au peuple par quelque marque speciale et estrangiere ; moy, le premier, par mon estre universel ; comme Michel de Montaigne, non comme grammairien, ou poëte, ou jurisconsulte [1] (iii. c. 2).

If we are to listen to him, and receive with a grave face his repeated and earnest protestations, his book has but a limited and narrow end. He has no thoughts of teaching philosophy, except what can be gained from the faithful portrait of his single self. And his reasons for attempting this portrait are of the most modest and private kind.[2] He took to writing for want of something to do, when he retired to spend his few remaining years in peace and away from the stir of men; and having nothing else to write about, began to write about himself. His first

[1] Others form man ; I only report him ; and represent a particular one ill-made enough ; and whom, if I had him to model anew, I should certainly make something very different from what he is ; but that's past recalling. . . . I propose a life mean, and without lustre, but 'tis all one ; all moral philosophy is applied as well to a private life as to one of the greatest employment. Every man carries the entire form of human condition. Authors have hitherto communicated themselves to the people by some particular and foreign mark ; I, the first of any, by my universal being ; as Michael de Montaigne, not as a grammarian, a poet, or a lawyer.

[2] ii. c. 8 init.

reason for writing, he declares, was to make his mind ashamed of its own follies by keeping a record of them; he had hoped that by time and experience it had become sufficiently solid and ripe to make good use of the leisure which he designed for it; but he found, on the contrary, that it got idle, and gave itself airs, and was as wild and uncontrollable as a horse broke loose:—

Et m'enfante tant de chimeres et monstres fantasques les uns sur les aultres, sans ordre et sans propos, que, *pour en contempler à mon ayse l'ineptie et l'estrangeté*, i'ay commencé de les mettre en roolle, *esperant avecques le temps luy en faire honte à luy mesme*[1] (i. c. 8).

Then, in time, he found himself engaged in a kind of autobiography,[2] a register of his life, not by actions, for fortune had made them too inconsiderable, but by what came into his head from time to time, and he was not too lazy to write down,—an undertaking in which there was no natural end, and in which he might go on without stopping and without exertion, as long as he had ink and paper,[3]—in which he did not care what he put down, or how he contradicted himself, seeing it was but the record of changing humours and varying views—flying sketches seized in passing, and recording alterations, not from year

[1] And creates me so many chimæras and fantastic monsters, one upon another, without order or design, that, the better at leisure to contemplate their strangeness and absurdity, I have begun to commit them to writing, hoping in time to make them ashamed of themselves.

[2] ii. c. 18, p. 369.

[3] iii. c. 9, p. 234.

to year, but from hour to hour and minute to minute; contradictory to themselves, it may be, but never to the truth.[1] Nothing can be more humble, nothing more disparaging than his manner of qualifying his performances; they are a "rhapsody,"[2] a piece of "marqueterie," "fantasies without shape and conclusion," "a collection of monstrous grotesques such as one sees round a picture or a page of print," a "fagotage" of extravagancies of every variety, jotted down in his moments of lazy leisure,—"une fricassée que je barbouille:"—prove him ignorant, and that is just what he says he is; all he does is, "niaiser et fantastiquer" about philosophy[3]—to try his hand as children write themes, or hare-brained scholars stick up their rash theses; all he has to say for his attempts is, that if they are nonsense, they are at least not pompous nonsense. "Personne n'est exempt de dire des fadaises, le malheur est de les dire curieusement."[4]

Why then write at all? Why, to begin with, he likes to talk to his paper; it is a very good listener. In the next place, if his grandchildren are like himself, they will be glad to know what their ancestor was like, and to have some memorials of him:—

I am not making a statue to be set up at the corner of the streets or in a church or public place; it is but for

[1] iii. c. 2, p. 24; ii. c. 37, p. 500; i. c. 25, p. 173.

[2] i. c. 13, p. 60; c. 56, p. 439; i. c. 27, p. 223; ii. c. 37, p. 500.

[3] iii. c. 13, p. 434; ii. c. 10, p. 559; ii. c. 3, p. 479.

[4] iii. c. 1, p. 1. "No one can help saying foolish things; the mischief is when people say them elaborately."

the corner of a book-shelf, and to amuse a neighbour, a friend, a relative, who will find pleasure in renewing his acquaintance and familiarity with me. What would I give to listen to some one who could tell me the ways, the look, the bearing, the commonest words of my ancestors? (ii. c. 18).

He does not like a man who has no care for even trifling mementos of them, their dress or their arms; he keeps religiously the book of Hours, the seal, the sword they used, and has not turned out of his library his father's long walking-sticks;[1] and so he provides for the same tastes in his successors. But why publish? Well then, he has some idea that there may be people in the world somewhat like-minded with himself, who will be drawn towards him, or tempted to make his acquaintance, when they see his picture: and if they are, they will start at advantage; "they will have learned in three days from his book as much as they could have done in many years of acquaintance."[2] Then the attempt itself is a novelty; the book is the first of its kind; to be sure, the design is wild and extravagant, and has nothing remarkable in it, except that it is a first attempt, "the only book of its sort";[3] but it is one that none of the ancients thought of hazarding, and its difficulty gives it interest:—

C'est une espineuse entreprinse, et plus qu'il ne semble, de suyvre une allure si vagabonde que celle de notre esprit, de penetrer les profondeurs opaques de ses replis

[1] ii. c. 18. [2] iii. c. 9, p. 289.
[3] ii. c. 8, p. 527.

internes, de choisir et arrester tant de menus airs de ses agitations : et est un amusement nouveau et extraordinaire, qui nous retire des occupations communes du monde, ouy, et des plus recommendées. Il n'y est description pareille en difficulté à la description de soi-mesme, ni certes en utilité [1] (ii. c. 6).

If the world complains that he talks too much about himself, he complains in return that it talks and thinks of everything but itself.[2] And he offers a specimen of a study of self, pursued for many years, carried on with minute and unflinching observation; a subject of which he can promise that he who treats it understood it better than any one else, and "on which he is the most learned man alive;"[3] a subject which, to be perfectly treated, requires only what he can give—fidelity and plainness of speech. He would gladly set men the example of attending less to the affairs of the world, "which go on very well without us,"[4] and more to themselves; and the humorist concludes by giving us an ungracious warning, in which he assuredly would not be pleased to be taken at his word :—

[1] No one since has followed the track ; 'tis a ticklish subject, and more nice than it seems, to follow a pace so extravagant and uncertain as that of the soul : to penetrate the dark profundities of her intricate internal windings, to choose and lay hold of so many little nimble motions ; it is a new and extraordinary undertaking, which withdraws us from the common and most recommended employments of the world. . . . There is no description so difficult, nor doubtless of so great utility, as that of one's self.

[2] iii. c. 10, p. 349.

[3] iii. c. 2, p. 25.

[4] iii. c. 9, p. 244.

C'est icy (is his preface) un livre de bonne foy, lecteur. Il t'advertit dez l'entree que ie ne m'y suis proposé aulcune fin, que domestique et privée ; ie n'y ay eu nulle consideration de ton service, ny de ma gloire. . . . Ainsi, lecteur, ie suis moi-meme la matiere de mon livre. Ce n'est pas raison que tu employes ton loisir en un subject si frivole et si vain. Adieu, donc.[1] (Preface.)

He seems the original of Bishop Butler's picture of the man "coming abroad in disorder, which he ought to be dissatisfied to find himself in at home."

Every one has heard of Montaigne's egotism. It is said to have suggested to the Port-royalists to coin the word. It edged the sneers of Brantome against the self-important and awkward man of the pen. It roused the bile of Dupuy and the younger Scaliger, at the writer who so carefully informed the world what wine he liked—"*Que diable a t'on à faire de savoir ce qu'il aime.*" It called down the gentle raillery of the *Spectator*.[2] It provoked the impatient scorn of Pascal at the cool and deliberate self-complacency of his favourite author—"*le sot projet que Montaigne a de se peindre.*" He was judged rather harshly, by judges who could not enter into the humour of his plan, and who took for granted very absolutely the current

[1] This, reader, is a book without guile. It tells thee, at the very outset, that I had no other end in putting it together but what was domestic and private. I had no regard therein either to thy service or my glory ; my powers are equal to no such design. . . . Thus, reader, thou perceivest I am myself the subject of my book ; 'tis not worth thy while to take up thy time longer with such a frivolous matter ; so fare thee well.

[2] No. 562.

axiom that a man must be foolish or vain who has much to say of himself. At any rate, Montaigne was no vulgar, self-deceived, shuffling egotist. He makes no secret that he writes his book about himself. He has a distinct and declared purpose in doing so, and he offers his reasons for it to our criticism. And no one can say that he spares himself, or wishes to appear as anything above the average of mankind, in the picture that he paints. But in the execution of his design he undoubtedly gives ample illustration of its difficulties. In speaking about himself, in defending his principle—that a man should not be afraid of avowing a fair and impartial judgment of what he is, fair and impartial to his excellencies as well as his defects—he shows abundantly that he is deficient in the great safeguard of speculators—a sense of the ridiculous. He is certainly plain-spoken enough about his faults; and he argues from his honesty about them that he cannot be tempted into conceit:—

Nulle particuliere qualité n'enorgueillira celuy qui mettra quand et quand en compte tant d'imparfaictes et foibles qualitez aultres, qui sont en luy, et au bout, le nihilité de l'humaine condition: qui se cognoistra ainsi, qu'il se donne hardiment à cognoistre par sa bouche[1] (ii. c. 6, *ad fin.*)

So shrewd a man ought to have known better than

[1] No particular quality can make any man proud, that will at the same time put the so many weak and imperfect ones he has in him in the other scale, and the nothingness of human condition to balance the weight. . . . Whoever shall so know himself, let him boldly speak out and make himself known.

to have advanced such a silly sentiment. Certainly, this knowledge did not prevent in him a large share of self-complacency and vanity. There is a subtle and exquisite relish in the sagacity and delicate skill with which he has disentangled and exactly discriminated in himself some defect of mental power, or obliquity of disposition, which quite overpowers his dissatisfaction at finding himself so foolish and so faulty. The self-love and self-respect of the man give way before the evident delight and pride of the anatomist at his own keenness and success. He was not blind to the fact, as there are few things within his horizon to which he was blind; but that did not hinder his vanity from having its full enjoyment, as each separate occasion presented itself. The air of it pervades his book. And, further, it is to be feared that the clear-eyed sage thought a good deal more than was consistent with his philosophy of those outward and conventional distinctions which had nothing to do with his worth or his faculties. He is pitiless in his humour on the pomp and grimace of office.[1] But the derider of circumstance and ceremony shows himself quite alive to the pleasure of having an order of knighthood, and is rather plaintive on the lowered dignity of that of St. Michel.[2] When he travelled, the hotels where he took up his abode were left garnished with the heraldic blazonries of the Gascon gentleman. And there is something very amusing in the affected confusion and contradiction of feeling, the

[1] iii. c. 10, p. 334. [2] ii. c. 12, p. 239; ii. c. 7, p. 523.

confessed vanity and the running protest against its folly, with which he records his Roman citizenship, and the pompous diploma conferring it, the copy of which he was so anxious to see beforehand, for fear it should not be quite flattering enough.[1]

But with all this vanity, and worse than it, with so much want of self-respect and manly modesty, it is difficult to wish that Montaigne had written less about himself. Half the originality and interest of the *Essais* would be missed if they only exhibited Montaigne's philosophy, instead of Montaigne philosophising. There is really something to be said for the prominence which he gives to his own personality. It was part of his protest against the pedantry, the cramped scope and artificial models of the book-making which was in vogue—part of his plan for breaking through the pompous formality of his age in writing. When a man writes in the first person he seems to waive the mysterious claim to attention and deference with which publication and the printed page invests him, and falls back on his private experience and opinion. He can speak more at his ease and with greater plainness, because he has no dignity to keep up, and offers himself for nothing more than he is worth. This secret had not been found out in serious writing by the revivers of learning till Montaigne showed it. By discarding the general, and pertinaciously keeping himself to the particular as the foundation of his remarks; by declining to be the

[1] iii. c. 9, p. 317.

representative of the wisdom of the public, or of any one's but his own; by insisting on keeping before his readers' minds that it was no shadowy *we* that was addressing them, but a plain *I* in his private capacity, with fancies and failings as many and as odd as those of any of themselves, he brought down writing from its stilts, and gave it a natural play, a range of power, and a healthy freshness, which in his own country it had never attained to, but never subsequently lost.

And, further, by coupling with his thoughts glimpses more or less complete of his own character and tastes, he gave, in an inferior degree indeed, yet in a degree, the same colour of life and reality to his philosophy, which we find in the Platonic dialogues. It is not merely a discourser or a system-maker, but a man who comes before us. We not merely hear his reasonings, but see him in action. We have a kind of guarantee and sensible proof of his being in earnest in what he says, when we see his principles fitted on to his own experience, when we see them interwoven not merely with what is serious and deliberate, but running through his playful or fantastic or irritated moods, and showing themselves when he is most at home and most off his guard.

Take, for instance, the essay on conversational intercourse—*De l'Art de Conférer*[1]—the essay whose excellence drew from Pascal the title of "incomparable" for its author, and which was the quickener and model of his own thoughts on the powers and

[1] iii. c. 8.

use of language. No doubt all that Montaigne has said there might have been condensed into the shape of general and impersonal reflection, as Pascal has done with a part of it that he quotes; all that there is in it of delicate observation, true insight, and excellent precept, might have been preserved; we should have had an admirable treatise on the rhetoric of social discourse; but the life and dramatic interest of Montaigne's essay would be gone. With him, it is a most spirited and vigorous history of his personal feelings and experience in that curious and characteristic portion of every man's display of himself—his way of behaving in conversation, or of conducting an argument. We have not an abstract arguer. We have Montaigne himself jousting before us in the intellectual conflict, warming with his love of the sport, exemplifying to us his rules and arts of fence, and describing the common order and incidents of such meetings of wits. He avows to us how much more to his taste is a collision with the living intellect than the languid intercourse with books. He is enthusiastic on the delights of a sturdy encounter—the *certaminis gaudia*, and on the pleasure of feeling the stress of an antagonist who tries his powers.

Si ie confere avecques une ame forte et un roide iousteur, il me presse les flancs, me picque à gauche et à dextre; ses imaginations elancent les miennes; la ialousie, la gloire, la contention, me poulsent et rehaussent au-dessus de moi-mesme; et l'unisson est qualité du tout ennuyeuse en la conference.[1]

[1] If I converse with a man of mind, and no flincher, who

He likes a bold adventurous style of play, and makes merry at the thin-skinned sensibility of people who cannot bear rough usage in discussion :—

Ie souffrirois estre rudement heurté par mes amis—"Tu es un sot ; tu resves." I'aime entre les galants hommes, qu'on s'exprime courageusement ; *que les mots aillent où va la pensée ;* il nous fault fortifier l'ouïe, et la durcir contre cette tendreur du son ceremonieux des paroles. I'aime une societé et familiarité forte et virile ; une amitie qui se flatte en l'aspreté et vigueur de son commerce, comme l'amour aux morsures et esgratigneures sanglantes ; elle n'est pas assez vigoureuse et genereuse, si elle n'est querelleuse, si elle est civilisée et artiste, si elle craint le heurt, et a ses allures contrainctes.[1]

He confesses, with whimsical earnestness, his intense impatience at a stupid answerer or opponent, and the mischievous spite which is awakened in him by a dispute which wanders from the point.

Tout un iour ie contesteray paisiblement, si la conduicte du debat se suyt avecques ordre ; . . . on respond

presses hard upon and digs at me right and left, his imagination raises up mine ; jealousy, glory, and contention stimulate and raise me up to something above myself ; unison is a quality altogether obnoxious in conversation.

[1] I could suffer myself to be rudely handled by my friends : "Thou art a fool ; thou knowest not what thou art talking about." I love stout expressions amongst gallant men, and to have them speak as they think : we must fortify and harden our hearing against this tenderness as to ceremonious sound of words. I love a strong and manly familiarity and converse ; a friendship that flatters itself in the sharpness and vigour of its communication, as love, in biting and scratching ; it is not vigorous and generous enough if it be not quarrelsome, if civilised and artificial, if it treads nicely and fears a shock.

tousjours trop bien pour moy, si on respond à ce que ie dis ; mais quand la dispute est troublée et desreglée, ie quitte la chose, et m'attache à la forme avecques despit et indiscretion ; et me iecte à une façon de debattre, testue, malicieuse, et imperieuse, de quoy j'ay à rougir aprez. Il est impossible de traiter de bonne foy avec un sot.[1]

And was there ever so happy a picture of the close of one of these hot *melées* of argument, and of the appearance of the field after the battle, as the following?—

Que sera ce enfin ? l'un va en orient, l'autre en occident ; ils perdent le principal, et l'escartent dans la presse des incidents : au bout d'une heure de tempeste, ils ne savent ce qu'ils cherchent ; l'un est bas, l'aultre hault, l'aultre costier :[2] qui se prend à un mot et une similitude ; qui ne sent plus ce qu'on luy oppose, tant il est engagé en sa course, et pense à se suyvre, non pas à vous ; qui se

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[1] I can peaceably argue a whole day together, if the argument be carried on with order : I do not so much require force and subtlety as order ; the order which we every day observe in the wrangling of shepherds and apprentices, but never amongst us. If they start from their subject 'tis an incivility, and yet we do it ; but their tumult and impatience never put them out of their theme ; their argument still continues its course ; if they anticipate, and do not stay for one another, they at least understand one another very well. Any one answers quite well enough for me, if he answers to what I say ; but when the dispute is irregular and perplexed, I leave the thing, and insist upon the form with anger and indiscretion ; and fall into a wilful, malicious, and imperious way of disputation, of which I am afterwards ashamed. 'Tis impossible to deal fairly with a fool ; my judgment is not only corrupted under the hand of so impetuous a master, but my conscience also.

[2] *A côté.*

trouvant foible de reins, craint tout, refuse tout, mesle dez l'entrée et confond le propos, ou, sur l'effort du debat, se mutine à se taire tout plat, par une ignorance despite, affectant un orgueilleux mespris, ou une sottement modeste fuyte de contention : pourveu que cettuy cy frappe, il ne luy chault combien il se decouvre ; l'aultre compte ses mots, et les poise pour raisons ; celuy là n'y employe que l'advantage de sa voix et de ses poulmons ;—en voyla un qui conclud contre soy mesme ; et cettuy cy qui vous assourdit de prefaces et digressions inutiles ; cet aultre s'arme de pures iniures, et cherche une querelle d'Allemaigne, pour se defaire de la societé et conference d'un esprit qui presse le sien ; ce dernier ne veoid rien en la raison, mais il vous tient assiegé sur la closture dialectiques de ses clauses, et sur les formules de son art.[1]

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[1] What will it be in the end? One flies to the east, the other to the west; they lose the principal, and wander in the crowd of incidents; after an hour of tempest they know not what they seek; one is low, the other high, and a third wide; one catches at a word and a simile; another is no longer sensible of what is said in opposition to him, being entirely absorbed in his own notions, engaged in following his own course, and not thinking of answering you; another, finding himself weak, fears all, refuses all, and, at the very beginning, confounds the subjects, or, in the very height of the dispute, stops short, and grows silent; by a peevish ignorance affecting a proud contempt, or an unseasonable modest desire to shun debate; one, provided he strikes, cares not how much he lays himself open; another counts his words, and weighs them for reasons; another only brawls, and makes use of the advantage of his lungs; here's one that learnedly concludes against himself, and another that deafens you with prefaces and senseless digressions; another falls into downright railing, and seeks a ridiculous quarrel to disengage himself from further contest with wits that press too hard upon his own; and a last man sees nothing in the reason of the thing, but draws a line of circumvallation about you of dialectic clauses, and the *formula* of his art.

He expatiates on the satisfaction of a fair fight, even if it goes against himself :—

Ie me sens bien plus fier de la victoire que ie gaigne sur moy, quand, en l'ardeur mesme du combat, ie me fois plier soubs la force de la raison de mon adversaire, que ie ne me sens gré de la victoire que ie gaigne sur luy par sa foiblesse ; je receois et advoue toute sorte d'attainctes qui sont de droict fil, pour foibles qu'elles soient . . . je festoye et caresse la verité en quelque main que je la trouve.[1]

And he recounts with malicious zest the stratagems which he employs, when his interlocutor has said something of which he does not himself know the value and force, to find out how far his man has hold of the truth which he has put forward and can defend it, and what is the real length of his tether ; how craftily he feigns to give way, to contradict, or to feign a perverse obtuseness, "to try on all sides how the truth is lodged in him ;" with what mischievous industry he probes and presses and urges his unwary and unconscious answerer, to make him show his real shallowness and poverty. He protests, with all his heart and energy, against the weak mercy of giving him any help if he flounders :—

I'oys journellement dire à des sots des mots non sots ;

[1] I am much prouder of the victory I obtain over myself, when, even in the ardour of dispute, I make myself submit to my adversary's force of reason, than I am pleased with the victory I obtain over him through his weakness. In short, I receive and admit all manner of hits that are direct, how weak soever. . . . I embrace and caress truth in what hand soever I find it.

ils disent une bonne chose ; sçachons jusques où ils la cognoissent ; veoyons par où ils la tiennent. Nous les aydons à employer ce beau mot et cette belle raison, qu'ils ne possedent pas ; ils ne l'ont qu'en garde ; ils l'auront produict à l'adventure et à tastons ; nous la leur mettons en credit et en prix. Vous leur prestez la main ; à quoy faire ? Ils ne vous en sçavent nul gré, et en deviennent plus ineptes ; ne les secondez pas, laissez les aller : ils manieront cette matiere comme gents qui ont peur de s'eschaulder ; ils n'osent luy changer d'assiette et de iour, ny l'enfoncer : croulez la (remuez la) tant soit peu ; elle leur echappe ; ils vous la quittent, toute forte et belle qu'elle est : ce sont de belles armes ; mais elles sont mal emmanchees. Combien de fois en ay ie veu l'experience ! Or si vous venez à les esclaircir et confirmer, ils vous saisissent et desrobbent incontinent cet advantage de votre interpretation : "c'estait ce que ie voulois dire : voylà iustement ma conception ; si ie ne l'ay ainsin exprimé, ce n'est que faulte de langue." *Soufflez. Il fault employer la malice mesme à corriger cette fiere bestise.*[1]

Instead of a mere treatise, we have an exquisite study of character; we have as much vigorous common sense, and rare shrewdness of remark as we can want; but besides them we have Montaigne himself in all

[1] I every day hear fools say things that are by no means foolish : they say a good thing ; let us examine how far they understand it, whence they have it, and what they mean by it. We help them to make use of this fine expression, and this fine reason, which is none of theirs—they only have it in keeping ; they have let it out at a venture ; we bring it for them into credit and esteem. You lend them a hand : to what purpose ? They do not think themselves obliged to you for it, and become more fools still. Never take their part, let them alone ; they will handle the matter like people who are afraid of burning their fingers ; they neither dare change its seat nor light, nor

his humorsome and quaint originality—conversing, arguing, putting himself into a dogged rage with one adversary, drawing out the stupidity of another, exulting in the mettle and hard head of a third, laying traps at one time and at another carrying on the struggle with fresh and rude joy, turning savage with his servants, not for their faults but for their densely stupid excuses—"sur le poinct de la bestise et opiniatreté de leurs allegations, excuses et deffenses asnieres et brutales—c'est pour desesperer;" dissecting and mocking with the highest glee the solemnity and silence of men who take refuge from argument in their authority and greatness—"Est il rien certain, resolu, desdaigneux, contemplatif, grave, serieux, comme l'asne?"—priding himself on keeping his temper, and "joyously lowering his ears" in the repartee of light conversation, and amusing himself with the infirmity of most of his fellows, "who change voice and colour when their force fails them, and by an unseasonable vexation, instead of taking their revenge, betray at once their weakness and their want of patience;" making himself unhappy

break into it; shake it never so little, it slips through their fingers; they give up their cause, be it never so strong or good soever; these are fine arms, but ill mounted. How many times have I seen the experience of this? Now, if you come to explain anything to them, and to confirm them, they presently catch at it, and rob you of the advantage of your interpretation: "It was what I was about to say; it was just my thought; and if I did not express it so, it was only for want of language." Very pretty! Malice itself must be employed to correct this proud ignorance.

that dulness has the privilege of being pleased with itself to a higher degree than sense ever can be, and frankly avowing his principle that against dulness all measures are lawful and all mischief fair. Compare the essay with Lord Bacon's terse, pregnant, but short-spoken *Essay on Discourse*, and the latter will seem like a chapter of Aristotle's Ethics, compared with the free and abounding life and wit of a dialogue of Plato.

And in spite of much that offends and much that wearies us, of much that amply justifies the disparaging names which he gives to his work, he succeeds in throwing a real interest and often a singular charm about the commonplace incidents and details of an ordinary life and a character of very moderate proportions. His inferiority of character even contributed to the perfection of the impression which he has left of it. A man of higher aims, of more concentrated purpose—nay of a deeper and more serious love of truth—could not have written of himself with the grotesque and contemptuous impartiality with which Montaigne has carefully preserved the minutest flaws and failures of his mental organisation, hunted after every trace of odd inconsistency, and detected with such malicious and inexorable shrewdness the various shiftings and shadings of his cameleon-like humour. Montaigne was neither proud, nor modest, nor very much in earnest; and so he was better qualified than most men, both to watch and to record with cold fidelity the curious and perplexing phenomena of the

inward and secret motions of thought and will. Few of the most conceited of mankind would venture on such hardiness and enthusiasm in self-assertion as Montaigne's energetic protestation—"Si je me semblois bon et sage tout à fait, je l'entonnerois à pleine tête."[1] Few of the most humble would think it necessary to profess such Quixotism against being too well-thought of as Montaigne's declaration—"Je reviendrois volontiers de l'autre monde, pour dementir celui qui me formeroit autre que j'étois, fût ce pour m'honorer."[2] His one fear is that he should yield to the temptation of making his picture too uniform and consistent, and not sufficiently bold in its contrasts for the apparent inconsecutiveness and discords of nature.

> If I speak differently of myself (he says), it is that I see myself differently; all contrarieties show themselves in me in their turn. I have nothing to assert of myself absolutely, simply, and in the gross—nothing without confusion and mixture; nothing, *in one word.—Distinguo* is the most universal member of my logic (ii. c. 1).

There is no order in his description of himself. His disclosures drop out at random, as they might in conversation; with more reserve in his earlier essays, which are comparatively stiff and show less of his own material; but becoming fuller as he goes on, till in the later ones of the third book, he is almost his only subject.[3] He paints himself as a thick-set, square-built, clumsy little man; so undersized that he did

[1] ii. c. 6, p. 520. [2] iii. c. 9, p. 293. [3] ii. c. 6, p. 511.

not like walking on foot, because the mud of the sixteenth-century streets bespattered him to his middle, and their rude crowds jostled and elbowed him;[1] so insignificant in presence,[2] that, in his own house, he was always getting from strangers but the fag-end of a bow which had been begun to his more important-looking barber; with eager step; with a loud and noisy voice, restless and fidgety,[3] with quicksilver, as he says, in his heels;[4] and eyes that could not be kept from wandering by the most ceremonious presence;[5] awkward to the last degree with his hands,[6] writing a blotted scrawl[7] which afterwards he could not read, and hopeless about the folding of a letter or the cutting of a pen; a poor performer in dancing and wrestling, and never able to learn anything of swimming, fencing, and vaulting; a country gentleman, born and bred among labouring people, yet ignorant as a child of the most ordinary country knowledge;[8] unable to saddle a horse or hold a hawk or call to a dog; unable to tell the value of a coin when he saw it, or to cast up accounts with counters or on paper; not knowing the difference between his oats and his barley, his cabbages and lettuces, or the names of the commonest implements of husbandry;[9] and—as he may as well confess the whole truth—once surprised in utter ignorance why leaven was put into

[1] iii. c. 13, pp. 461, 462. [2] ii. c. 17, pp. 331-333.
[3] iii. c. 11, p. 358; iii. c. 13, pp. 448, 469.
[4] iii. c. 13, p. 477. [5] iii. c. 13, p. 476. [6] ii. c. 17, p. 335.
[7] But see the note, i. 331. Ed. Lefevre, 1844.
[8] ii. c. 13, p. 351. [9] iii. c. 9, p. 244.

bread, and wine was left to ferment;[1] bored, almost beyond the power of expression, by the petty interruptions and worries of keeping up his property, of which he had never taken the trouble to look at the title-deeds; by his steward, who is never satisfied with the season;[2] by his neighbours, who quarrel among themselves, or encroach on him;[3] by his farm-buildings, which are always wanting to be looked after, and are always going wrong;[4] not quite happy, it seems, in Madame de Montaigne's temper and tastes;[5] continually distressed at the oppression and misery of his tenants in those days of plague and war; harassed by the insecurity of his own house from insult and plunder, and indignant at the weakness of the laws, yet making it his boast that it never had more than an old porter for its guard, and that it had passed through the troubles of the League unviolated. Such are some of the traits which Montaigne has preserved of his outward life; and he has, besides, carefully told us, with the loquacity of an old man more precise than delicate, of his habits of sleeping and eating, his taste in fish and game and wine, his pains and ailments, his austere customs, his hard and unwarmed bed, his single silk stockings in winter, and his resistance to spectacles. Among the inconveniences of war, he singles out the dust in which you have to ride all day; and he does not even forget to record that scratching—scratching his ear—was to

[1] ii. c. 17, p. 351. [2] iii. c. 9, p. 246.
[3] iii. c. 9, p. 238. [4] *Ibid.* 241. [5] iii. c. 9, pp. 239, 240.

him one of Nature's sweetest gratifications.[1] He lets us some way into his family history. He has preserved with great distinctness the image of his father,[2] a relic of the fifteenth century, who lived to find himself a primitive and old-fashioned man, one of the old school, in the sixteenth; light-hearted and simple, full of pious ways and practices, and a miracle of purity in word and life to the younger generation; illiterate, but an admirer of letters; a great builder, a popular magistrate, devoted to country business, brisk and active in his hale old age, and to the last always taking three steps at a time as he ran upstairs; full of quaint experiments for his son's education; sending him, as a child, to be brought up with poor people, that he might learn to sympathise with them afterwards; teaching him Latin, as his mother tongue, before French;[3] and making him learn the Greek declensions, as arithmetic and geometry were sometimes taught, by way of a game. But, with all his fancies, he secured the ripest scholars within reach—among them were Buchanan and Muretus—for the boy's domestic tutors. There is something touching in the veneration that Montaigne, a man of so different a stamp, feels for his father, and the eagerness with which he seizes an opportunity to show it. Equally strong is the impression which he leaves, though the image of the man is not so distinct, of his friendship

[1] iii. c. 13.

[2] ii. c. 2, p. 473; ii. c. 12, p. 43; iii. c. 9, p. 243; c. 10, p. 325.

[3] iii. c. 13, p. 467; i. c. 25, pp. 210-216; ii. c. 17, p. 330.

with Etienne de la Boëtie; a friendship soon closed by death, but which remained to Montaigne as one of his most cherished and one of his noblest possessions; a friendship, the remembrance of which seems to shoot like a thrill into his mind when we least expect it, and which he never touches upon without making us feel how perfect and how beautiful it must have been.

In truth, if I compare all the rest of my life, although, with the grace of God I have passed it sweetly, easily, and, saving the loss of such a friend, exempt from heavy affliction, full of tranquillity of spirit, having taken as my full payment my natural and original advantages, without seeking out for others—if I compare it all with the four years in which it was given me to enjoy the sweet companionship and society of this person, it is but smoke—it is but a dark and cheerless night. Since the day that I lost him—

Quem semper acerbum
Semper honoratum (sic Dî voluistis!) habebo—

I do but drag myself along without strength; the very pleasures which present themselves to me, in lieu of consoling me, but double my regret for his loss. Each of us was half in everything; I feel to myself as if I were robbing him of his share (i. c. 27).

And yet that death was itself a precious memory. How noble are these words on the early death of the hopeful and aspiring; words in which, though he does not mention La Boëtie's name, it is plain that he was thinking of him. "There are brave and fortunate deaths. I have seen the thread and progress of a marvellous rise, in the flower of its growth cut

short by death, but with so proud an end, that, in my opinion, the man's aspiring and high-hearted purposes had nothing in them so exalted as was their interruption; he attained, without the journey, to the mark he had set to himself, more grandly and gloriously than was contained in his desire and his hopes; and in his fall he shot beyond the power and the renown which he aimed at in his running."

And for the man himself, in his inward bent and features, his singularities of manner, his fancies and humours, we have him before us in every variety of light; a brisk, elastic, cheerful, communicative personage, not ill-satisfied with himself, in spite of the flow of grave self-depreciating comment and amusing confidences about his own incapacity with which he overwhelms us; full of gay banter and sly irony and sharp sarcasm; full of doubts and contradictions where other people see things plain or take them for granted; careless and scornful of the show of wisdom, and affecting for himself the plain native unqualified reality, in thoughts and words; a man abounding in distrust and misgivings about pretences and outsides, but also in hearty sympathy and admiration for what is great and noble; thoroughly appreciating the delicacy or strength or refined harmony of a high character, thoroughly honouring the genuine learning of a Justus Lipsius or an Adrian Turnebus,[1] thoroughly

[1] i. c. 25, p. 173; ii. c. 12, p. 241; i. c. 24, p. 161; ii. c. 17 pp. 327, 364.

entering into the excellences of those "rich and great natures" whom common report had made famous. Shrewd, independent, obstinate, wayward, he trusts no one but himself, and himself not much. The right to be inconsistent he will defend to the death: "Je me desavoue sans cesse." He turns away with loathing from the absorbing care and labour, the solemnity, the dull weary weight, the stiffness, which hangs on the world; a hater of ceremony, of sadness, of constraint, of effort, of all obligation, assiduity, and constancy; of all that he was tied and forced and expected to do: a man who "loved and cultivated" himself, and made it his pride that he belonged only to himself; not afraid of society, but only of its business; shrinking "not from the crowd of men, but of affairs;" in all that he did, in his reading, in his talk, in his way of writing, jealous of his absolute liberty, jealous of his exemption from trouble; indolent, yet capable of a quick and sudden spring, "*un esprit primsaultier;*"[1] making a plunge at the knot of the question, and into the thickest of the difficulty, but without spirit and interest to persevere if the first spring failed; keenly alive to the mysteries and uncertainties of life, but with little care for their solution, and little belief in its possibility; a wanderer over all fields of thought rather than a labourer, just as he loved to wander in his travels without fixed time or goal, and turning aside from his road, or retracing his day's journey, for the sake of any

[1] ii. c. 10, pp. 562, 568.

unexplored object. Not for the renown of Sallust would he bind himself to the task of writing the history of his times, though his friends told him that, from his wide observation and independent mind, he was so capable of it. For no consideration would he "break his head" for science, of however great value it might be. We see him, in conversation, sociable, yet nice in his choice—*bête de compagnie, non de troupe*[1] —cold and round and dry, when not at home with his company—"*car mon aller n'est pas naturel, si ce n'est à pleine voile ;*" absent and silent, where the talk was small and commonplace ; giving the most stupid and silly answers, and showing the most childish ignorance of ordinary things, "out of which two qualities," he says, "I have gained that five or six stories might have been made of me, true ones, too, as ridiculous as are told of any one, be he who he may ;" in his conversation with the great, breaking through all etiquette with the eager frankness of his address, going straight to the point, and presenting himself "*fierement et maigrement*" to those whom he most honoured ; losing love, though "never did any man do less to be hated," by the reserve of his ordinary conversation ; spoiling the best story in telling it ; unable to prepare a speech in his head, or to keep in his mind the successive points of what had been said to him ; put out and brought to a standstill if interrupted ; but bursting forth into the most animated and continuous and vehement speech,

[1] iii. c. 3.

becoming a loud and rapid and gesticulating Gascon, when some sudden reason forced him or some congenial society and favourite argument drew him out, when some worthy antagonist put him on his mettle, or some stupid and unfair adversary provoked him.[1] We see him watching curiously the processes of his mind, noticing the strange and sudden way in which thoughts shoot into the mind, open out, and vanish; the effect on them, and on their force and meaning, of chance circumstances, movements, sounds, tones, accents; the perversity with which some, which seem our freshest and deepest and clearest, present themselves on the most inconvenient and incongruous occasions, when we cannot arrest or pursue or record them. He laments how a thought, which seemed distinctly shaped and strongly impressed on us, slips into cloudiness as soon as we take up the pen to write, and baffles our attempts to recover it; and how there always "remains in the soul a certain troubled image of our thought, which presents, as in a dream, a better form than that which we have used, but which we cannot get hold of and work out;" "a view of the land beyond, but a confused and misty one, which we cannot disentangle."[2] He observes the strange way in which he involuntarily imitated the language of the book last read, the dialect of those he talked with, the catch-words and oaths and exclamations round him, even the tricks and grimaces and ways of speaking, which displeased or amused

[1] ii. c. 17. [2] ii. c. 17, pp. 324-326; i. c. 25, p. 170.

him. He records minutely the various phases of sensation, thought, and memory which he went through, after an accident which, for the time, took away his senses.[1] He dwells feelingly on the strange caprices and failures of memory; if something comes into his head, and he must cross his courtyard to write it down in his library, he must give it to some one to keep for him, lest it should evaporate on the way; if a thought occurs to him on horseback, when he is not expecting it,—and it is then, he says, when the necessity of the road stops talk, that his deepest and most playful ones, and those that please him most, are produced,—the chance is that his memory will only give him back the *colour* of the thought, gay or sad or strange, like that of dreams, but the substance is gone irretrievably; of his servants' names, he can remember, perhaps, that they have three syllables, that the sound is rough, that they begin or end with a particular letter, and nothing more. And memory is not to be forced; the more he distrusts it, the more it becomes confused; he must solicit it as if it were "by chance, and as if not caring; if he presses it, it bewilders itself, and, when once it has begun to lose its footing, the more he sounds it, the more it becomes entangled; it will serve him at its own time —not at his;" and he consoles himself, optimist that he is, on the badness of his memory—so bad, that it fails to recognise his own compositions—by reflecting that it has cut him off from the ways of ambition,

[1] ii. c. 17, p. 348.

and prevented him from boring and deafening his friends by the stream of his talk and, like some of his acquaintances—sensible men, too—by the length of his stories.

And again, with many curious incidental notices of the feelings and political condition of his age, we have most strongly marked, how dissonant to his nature were the times in which he lived—dissonant in their cruelty and falsehood to his kindly nature and straightforward honesty; dissonant in their stirring greatness and eventful energy to his aversion to decision, earnestness, and trouble. Not but that there was much to interest him. He watched with the liveliest wonder and almost with awe the New World of the West, with its strange nations and, in those days, its sad fortunes. He observed with anxiety, and yet with admiration, the growth of the Ottomans,[1] and the singular organisation and discipline of their armies. But at home and in Europe he found little but what raised in him aversion and contempt. He hated the Reformation with the most entire hatred; his conservative instincts and his readiness to doubt combined to make him look with fear on the opening to the world at large of questions to which he shut his eyes; he charged it with being but an external arbitrary reformation, which left the vices of its votaries, their ambition, their pride, their avarice unamended; and cast a bitter sneer at the reformer, apparently Beza, who "with one hand presented to

[1] i. c. 24, p. 168; iii. c. 12, p. 379; ii. c. 21, p. 385.

the people verses pre-eminent both in beauty and licentiousness, and with the other the sourest theological reformation that the world had broken its fast upon for many a day." In France he saw nothing but "the spectacle of a public death."[1] He found himself in times "when every French gentleman saw himself from hour to hour on the point of the utter ruin of his fortune;" nay, when as a natural reason for educating a boy to bear pain with fortitude, the prospect presented itself of his some day or other, in the mere course of things, incurring legal punishment, and having to bear the prison and the rack.[2] And terrible as were the ferocity and the violence, the undissembled contempt for good faith and truth was more dreadful still. It raised Montaigne's cynical humour to the highest pitch. He professes to admit, with a coolness worthy of Machiavelli, that wickedness plays a necessary and indispensable part in cementing the public weal: "the public good requires that there should be people to betray, to lie, to massacre;" he only bargains that he may be excused in favour of others more obedient and more supple; but he is not so unfashionable as to set up the exclusive claims of openness and fair dealing, except on his own private account—" je ne veux pas priver la tromperie de son rang; ce seroit mal entendre le monde; je sais qu'elle a servi souvent profitablement, et qu'elle maintient et nourrit la plus part des vacations des hommes." His cool and shrewd sagacity shows

[1] iii. c. 9, p. 302; c. 12, p. 385. [2] i. c. 25, p. 181.

him how tenacious of life are old states and constitutions, even in their most hopeless disorder—"tout ce qui bransle ne tombe pas;" but amid the helplessness of the laws, the downfall of the royal authority, the anarchy of the feudal nobles and gentry,—"nos tiercelets et quartelets des rois,'—the savage exasperation and relentless craft of every party, the misery and hopelessness of the poor, the apparent vanity of the hope that some one would try being just and true, merely as a means to power—Montaigne seems to give up his country as lost. "Let us thank fortune that it has made us live in a time not soft, not feeble, not idle—one that if it would not be famous for any other reason, will at least be famous for its misfortunes."[1]

He did not shrink from taking a side: the laws, he says, had chosen it for him, and he served the king. He seems to have been familiar with the court; and a thorough Frenchman, he was enthusiastic in his love of Paris—"which he never ceased to love, however offended with France—that great city, by which alone he was a Frenchman." But the zeal, the earnestness, the thoroughness of a partisan he utterly disclaims for the cause that he thought the best. His tastes were not in the way of that fierce wild world round him. "Je m'aime trop," he says. He professes, with the most unqualified frankness, to prize far too highly his leisure and his liberty, to sacrifice them for those "high and commanding fortunes" which were being fought for and won on all sides. He is not ill-

[1] v. iii. c. 9, p. 257; ii. c. 17, p. 341; iii. c. 12, p. 385.

pleased to remember that one side called him Guelf, and the other Ghibelline. Doggedly realising his condition and its perils, he refused to submit to the ordinary precautions and restraints which it prescribed. In Guyenne, the very focus of the civil war, in spite of his known professions and equally known lukewarmness, he refuses to fortify his house—he has "left it to the stars to guard;" he boasts with immense glee that it has never been violated, and that in moments of treachery and danger his undoubting trustfulness and bold frankness have conjured away the mischief. "Je doute,' is his confession, "si je peux assez honnêtement avouer à combien vil prix du repos et tranquillité de ma vie, je l'ai plus de moitié passée en la ruyne de mon pays."[1] He liked to sharpen the contrasts between his absence of excitement, his cool way of going through public duties, with the restlessness and effort and display all round him. He is only too happy that his mayoralty at Bordeaux should have passed without anything remarkable. "Ils disent cette mienne vacation s'être passée sans marque et sans trace. Il est bon! on accuse ma cessation en un temps où *quasi tout le monde etoit convaincu de trop faire.*"[2]

It is pleasant to see the picture which he shows us by glimpses, of so much love and enjoyment of life in spite of surrounding danger and trouble—of a course so generally fortunate, and so happy to look back to—of advantages for the most part allowed

[1] iii. c. 12, p. 386. [2] iii. c. 10, pp. 349, 350.

their full play—of so much free and hearty swing of a rich and vigorous nature; to read his cheerful recognitions that his lot was such a congenial and suitable one—his manly and honest avowals that he was a man made for prosperous days, only good in them, and his equally honest avowals that when pain and trouble came he did not find them so bad as he had imagined them. In measuring his self-indulgent love of ease, his "fainéantise," we must take account of the strong irony which runs through his confessions against himself—his keen sense and admiration of all that is noble and generous—his shrewd and thorough insight into the self-deceits and disguises which lurk about the talk and professions of busy men. And it is impossible not to be struck with the calm and real way in which, cheerful and pleasure-loving man as he is, he contemplates the look and the approaches of death, eyes it with a strange and fearless interest, traces with thankfulness the gentle ways in which nature prepares us for it, "lends us her hand and gives us courage," and makes the passage from youth and strength to old age—which would be so intolerable if abrupt—so gradual and so insensible, "that we are tamed to it, and feel no shock when youth dies in us, which is in reality a harder death than the total death of a feeble life;"—with the strong hold he has of the truth, that life and death are of a piece—"*nous ne devenons pas autres pour mourir*"—and the wish that it might find him doing his ordinary work, "planting his cabbages, with most of his garden

unfinished." But on the other hand, a far less pleasant view is forced on us. His deep and overwhelming sense of the nothingness of man, of the smallness of his greatest plans and the emptiness of his greatest achievements, seems to be for ever crushing down in him the idea of duty, the wish for good, the thought of immortality. That cherished liberty —that playful sturdiness in asserting his exemption from care and effort—that open frankness, which warns you against taking it all for earnest, when he confesses his low standard and low aims, is, at bottom, the inspiration and the preaching of a deep-rooted selfishness. There is no hiding that dominant feature of the *Essais*, under an affectation of honestly avowing it for the purpose of disparaging it. With his keen and thoroughgoing sagacity he saw into and hated much in the current morality of his contemporaries, that they were not offended at—their falsehood, their cruelty, their injustice, their intrigues and restlessness. But he showed to the full, though in a subtler and more refined form, their epicurean worldliness; and he did not even disguise that he had imbibed without scruple their gross sensuality. Montaigne says many beautiful and noble things of friendship—"there is nothing that he knows so well to do, as to be a friend;" but he does not seem able even to conceive that there can be anything so excellent and refined as friendship, in marriage.

And if Montaigne wanted the moral tone, he also wanted many of the powers which are requisite to make

a great thinker; and he was far from using those rare endowments which he had to their full advantage. His philosophy is a poor and unworthy one, though his mind was so large and his insight so keen. He noted what came before him as chance rather than design brought it under his inquisitive and penetrating eye; but he had not the patience, the wish, perhaps not the capacity, to grasp together firmly and in their relative bearings, a series of observations. He unfolds, but does not gather up. He studies truth in successive portions, but never detains and embraces them in one. Its rays fall on his mind clear and strong, but they pass through it parallel to one another, and never converge; he has no power of bringing them to a focus. In the forcible representation which his book gives of the variety, the mixture, the conflicting appearances of the world, there is no care shown to find the key, or to trace a predominant purpose or tendency. But this very absence of concentration, of balancing, of construction, contributes, perhaps, to the liveliness of his separate conceptions. He has no temptation to qualify, to eliminate, to soften down, and pare away. When the opposite aspect, the limiting or complementary truth, comes round in its turn, he will deal with it equally boldly and without reserve; meanwhile, he is engrossed with the one immediately present. At any rate, so it is, that though the effect of his meditations, as a whole, is confused and uncertain, his sayings and trains of thought, one by one, strike the mind and fasten on the memory with a

force which witnesses to the sagacity and genius which has produced them.

Books were comparatively few in Montaigne's day, and the avenues to real knowledge were choked up and uncertain. He himself was peculiarly alive to their difficulties and imperfections. Yet there was scarcely any subject of human interest to which his attention had not been directed, and on which he had not some shrewd opinion to express. The man of universal knowledge was not an unheard-of character in those days; but the man of universal inquisitiveness, the man without knowledge, whose thoughts were awakened and set astir by every fresh object, however familiar or however strange, had not yet become so common. Montaigne represents, imperfectly enough in some ways, but very perfectly in others, the educated man of modern times—a man whose powers have probably been developed and strengthened by some special study or pursuit, but who has been trained to perceive and feel a much wider field of action, of character, of knowledge all around him; and whose interest and thoughtfulness find subjects to fasten on, whenever the course of his reading or the chances of his life carry him into it. Such men may, indeed, be but superficial and meddling triflers, without patience or purpose. But if they are men of practised mind, possessed of real force and spring, they will show, even under the disadvantage of approaching an unaccustomed subject, the play and discipline of their intelligence; and the fresh and

bold handling of even an unskilled master-hand may leave something behind for remembrance and admiration. Montaigne's conception of nature and the world was a wide and lofty one; and whatever was found within that vast circle, was to him a matter to take note of, to inquire into, to look at in its genuine and natural aspect. "Nous sommes touts (he says) contraincts et amoncelez en nous, et avons la vue raccourcie à la longueur de notre nez;" while without us, infinite and unfathomable, spreads the immensity and diversity of the universe, of that which is to be known, and of that which now we never shall know.

Qui se presente comme dans un tableau cette grande image de notre mere nature en son entiere maiesté; qui lit en son visage une si generale et constante varieté; qui se remarque là dedans, et non soy, mais tout un royaume, comme un traict d'une poincte tres-delicate, celuy là seul estime les choses selon leur iuste grandeur [1] (i. c. 25).

To follow up, and to deepen in his mind the impression of this multiplicity and changefulness of the world, is an object which discloses itself all through his writings. He dwells on the endlessly differing shapes in which life and thought and feeling present themselves. He summons up before his imagination

[1] But whoever shall represent to his fancy, as in a picture, that great image of our mother nature, portrayed in her full majesty and lustre; whoever in her face shall read so general and so constant a variety, whoever shall observe himself in that figure, and not himself but a whole kingdom, no bigger than the least touch of a pencil, in comparison of the whole, that man alone is able to value things according to their true estimate and grandeur.

the muster and account of all that has gone on in the world, of human activity and of the events of nature, and of all that is going on at this moment all round us, absolutely lost to our knowledge, as if it had no existence. The vast prospect subdues and humbles him; but it also stirs up and attracts a corresponding variety of thoughts and interests. It sets him on exercising and trying his powers whenever they come in contact with the realities about him, however much they may lie out of the common track and beat of his thoughts. For we are in danger, he says, in the use of our intellectual faculties, of turning round and round in the same circle, instead of moving forwards. And he would have the mind equipped and prepared for whatever encounter the day's events may have in store for it, regulating its efforts by the object before it, but not unwilling to try its mettle on any. In work, in reading, in company, he is afraid of becoming riveted and narrowed down to what suits his taste or his capacity.

Ie louerois une ame à divers estages qui sçache et se tendre et se demonter, qui soit bien par tout où sa fortune la porte; qui puisse deviser avecques son voisin, de son bastiment, de sa chasse, et de sa querelle; entretenir avecques plaisir, un charpentier et un jardinier.[1]

[1] The soul for me is a soul of many stages—a soul which could wind itself up to a great effort, and then sink back into slackness; which is well wherever its fortune carries it; which can talk with a neighbour about his building, his hunting, and his quarrel; and find pleasure in conversing with a carpenter or a gardener.

It is this "*ame à divers estages*," able to raise or depress itself at pleasure, and suit itself to all occasions, which fits a man for a becoming and profitable intercourse with his fellowmen,—which appreciates the homely strength of the lowest, as well as the grace and richness of the highest. It was such a mind in him, which, while lamenting its own stiffness and uncommunicativeness in dealing with common minds, could yet recognise that they are often as much under regulation as the most refined ones; and which, with such true and delicate discrimination, fixed on the one point which, in discourse with them, educated people must never overlook:—"Il faut se demettre au train de ceulx avecques qui vous êtes, et parfois affecter l'ignorance: mettez à part la force et la subtilité; *c'est assez d'y reserver l'ordre.*" It was such a mind, too, which could sketch so truly and beautifully the free and open-hearted conversation of men of high taste and cultivation. And it was such a mind which could produce such a medley of noble things and base, of deep things and shallow, of good sense and nonsense, of humour and puerile folly, of kindly simplicity and detestable cynicism, of genuine truthfulness and patent affectation, as the book of Essays.

But Montaigne's profession of interest in all subjects of human concern is unequally fulfilled. That pattern of a mind open and alive to all wonders and lights which meet it, is conceived more truly than it is realised by him. In his day, there was some excuse

for him. The great mass of human knowledge was at that time still so confused and imperfect, that there was little to attract a looker-on, not avowedly devoted to some one of its branches, to plunge into the labyrinth. Its leading aspect to him would be its uncertainty and its want of reality. Montaigne notices the sciences, not for their own sake, but because they were cared for among men. His curiosity is not excited by their subjects, for these seemed buried and inaccessible under the fictions and suppositions of people who could not get to the bottom of them, and would not acknowledge that they were at a loss; he dwells on them chiefly as illustrating the tricks and contradictions and self-deceptions of the human mind, the mischiefs and follies into which it had been misled by its self-confidence. Nature to him appeared veiled and impenetrable:—

> Ay-ie pas veu, en Platon, ce divin mot, "que nature n'est qu'une poësie enigmatique?" comme, peult-estre, qui diroit une peincture voilee et tenebreuse, entreluisant d'une infinie varieté de faux iours à exercer nos coniectures?[1] (ii. c. 12).

And science he looked upon as playing the sophist with fancies which belonged to poetry; "she gives us not what is, not what she believes, but what she

[1] Have I not read in Plato this divine saying that "nature is nothing but an enigmatic poesy!" As if a man might perhaps see a veiled and shady picture, breaking out here and there with an infinite variety of false lights to puzzle our conjectures.

can invent most plausible and most beautiful;" where she confesses that she cannot reach, she imagines other substances and invests them with unreal forms of her own invention, and bids us take her fictions for granted, at the moment that she tells us they are fictions. Astronomy imagines her epicycles. Moral philosophy has imitated the mechanics of astronomy, built up the little world of man, with aspects and parts innumerable, has divided and arranged our soul into ideal faculties and portions according to its fancy, and yet has not been able to exhaust the subject:—

Not merely in reality, but not even in their dreams can they so order the soul, but that there will be some cadence, some note, which escapes their plan of construction, all disproportioned as it is, and put together with a thousand false and fanciful members. Nor have they any excuse. For with painters, when they paint the sky, the earth, the seas, the distant isles, we pardon them if they only show us some faint trace, and as in matters beyond our knowledge, we are satisfied with any sort of shadowing forth and fancy; but when they portray us after nature, or any object which is familiar and well known to us, we require from them a perfect and exact representation of features and tints, and we hold them cheap if they fail. . . . Should nature one day (he bursts out, as if divining what was to come) be pleased to open to us her bosom, and make us behold in very truth the means and the plan of her movement, and prepare our eyes to see it, O my God, what cheats, what mistakes should we not find in our poor science! I am deceived, if in one single thing she has hold of the reality as it is (ii. c. 12).

When we know what Descartes and Bacon report

of the state of the sciences in those days, we need not wonder at a man like Montaigne, a by-stander and not an adept, but so keenly alive to pretence and so obstinate in trying to reach what was real and solid, distrusting and turning away from them. On whatever subject he was engaged, he liked to feel that his thoughts had come in contact with its very substance; that they had broken through all images, and generalities, and conventional representations, and had got hold of the thing itself. The charm of his more serious judgments and expressions of feeling consists in this uncompromising attempt to get at the real features of what he was looking at, and to say his real thoughts about it. You feel that he is not trying to be original, or fine, or eloquent, or complete and consistent; but that he is using his keen eyes, and trying to say exactly what they have shown him; trying to reproduce, in forcible and corresponding words, the exact impressions which are on his mind, neither more nor less; not caring much for awkwardness, or violation of custom, or apparent onesidedness, or the necessity of confessing a doubt of his being right after all, so that he clearly conveys his meaning. And so there is a justness, a temperateness, a good sense, to be found in his writings,—a real coming to the point, an openness both to the more delicate and subtle class of feelings, and to the real worth and dignity of common ones, a felicitous escape from the cramped and commonplace and inflated ways which every age has in readiness to catch and bind the ordinary run of its

writers, a self-possession and command over language, which we do not expect in those early days of modern literature. His style of remark on books and authors is an instance of this. The books he used were all well-known and famous ones, which everybody read and admired and quoted; their established and official panegyrics were in every one's mouth; scholars repeated what scholars before them had said, and the general world repeated by hearsay from the scholars. It is not that Montaigne says anything very new about them; but he says it, not as if he had of course to praise one whom everybody praised, but because reading the book had left certain impressions about it on his mind. His criticism lets us in, in pithy and pertinent words, to his genuine taste and likings, and to the particular qualities which really struck him in each book. How excellently and how simply has he said just the true thing about Lucretius in comparison with Virgil:—

> Ceulx des temps voisins à Virgile se plaignoient de quoy aulcuns luy comparoient Lucrece; je suis d'opinion que c'est à la verité une comparaison ineguale; *mais j'ay bien à faire à me rasseurer en cette creance quand je me trouve attaché à quelque beau lieu de ceulx de Lucrece*[1] (ii. c. 10).

How fresh and large the judgment which, filled

[1] Such as lived near Virgil's time were scandalised that some should compare him with Lucretius. I am of opinion that the comparison is, in truth, very unequal; a belief that, nevertheless, I have much ado to assure myself in, when I meet with some excellent passages in Lucretius.

with admiration of the great classic poets, and further so far bound to its own age as to think that nothing greater could be achieved in French poetry than what had been done by Ronsard and Du Bellay,[1] yet could see beauty in the popular poetry of a province.[2] And how true and well-trained the taste, which in that age of poetical conceits could discern so clearly the difference between the genuine beauty of Virgil and Catullus and the points and affectation of their successors; and could appreciate so fully and enthusiastically the force and marvellous genius which chose and gave life to the words of the older poets:—"Quand je veois ces braves formes de s'expliquer, si vives, si profondes, je ne dis pas que c'est *Bien dire*, je dis que c'est *Bien penser*."[3]

The same characteristic of straightforward good sense, resolutely shaking itself loose from the follies, the affectations, the prejudices which reigned among the learned and the talkers of the day, shows itself in his thoughts on education. He grasps firmly and urges home the truth, often, it must be said, with exaggeration and love of paradox, that education is primarily the development and practice of faculties, and only subordinately the furnishing of the memory with knowledge. "J'aime mieux," he says, "forger mon âme, que la meubler."[4] His humour, his sarcasm, his indignation, his thorough contempt of all outside knowledge and technical acquirement, his keen power

[1] ii. c. 17, p. 364; i. c. 25, p. 207. [2] i. c. 54.
[3] iii. c. 5, p. 127. [4] iii. c. 3, p. 45.

of getting at the plain truth and setting it forth, are all directed, probably for the first time in those days, and with zeal and energy never surpassed since, against a training which only aimed at stuffing the memory without exercising, or refining, or protecting the mind. He may have been mistaken in some of the processes which he undervalued, and in others which he would have substituted; but the true principle of education—the true condition of real knowledge,—"*il ne faut pas attacher le sçavoir à l'âme, il faut l'incorporer*"[1]—he disentangled and held up to view with admirable good sense. And the same good sense which opened his eyes to some of those plain truths to which, commonly, his contemporaries were blind—such as the indefensibleness of torture—made him protest earnestly against the unkindly and forbidding drill, often the harshness and cruelty, which in those days were thought the natural and necessary means to break in children. I suppose he is the only writer of his time who ever thought it worth while, as he passed along the streets, to heed or take notice of the brutality of poor parents to their little children.

And no man had, more than Montaigne, a quick feeling and sympathy for all that was noble, or touching, or elevating in human life. No one saw sooner than he when and by what means the delicate and deeply-hidden strings of the soul were reached and moved. No one felt more exquisitely the mingled inclination to smile and to be sad together,

[1] i. c. 24, p. 162.

at the strange blendings of fortune, the strange mixtures of character, the whimsical yet melancholy issues and endings, which abound in human life. A topic, for instance, on which he dwells very strongly is the estrangement of children by the reserve and distance which the fashion of the day prescribed to parents. Here is one of his illustrations. With what full sympathy is the picture drawn, both for the ludicrous, and for the affecting side of it:—

I'en ai veu quelqu'un, duquel la ieunesse avait esté tresimperieuse ; quand c'est venu sur l'aage, quoyqu'il le passe sainement ce qui se peult, il frappe, il mord, il jure, le plus tempestatif maistre de France ; il se ronge de soing et de vigilance. Tout cela n'est qu'un bastelage, auquel la famille mesme complotte : du grenier, du cellier, voire et de sa bource, d'aultres ont la meilleure part de l'usage, cependant qu'il en a les clefs en sa gibbeciere, plus cherement que ses yeulx. Ce pendant qu'il se contente de l'espargne et chicheté de sa table, tout est en debauche en divers reduicts de sa maison, en jeu, et en despense, et en l'entretien des contes de sa vaine cholere et pourvoyance. Chascun est en sentinelle contre luy. Si, par fortune, quelque chestif serviteur s'y addonne, soubdain il luy est mis en souspeçon, qualité à laquelle la vicillesse mord si volontiers de soy mesme. Quantes fois s'est il vanté à moy de la bride qu'il donnoit aux siens, et exacte obeïssance et reverence qu'il en recevoit ; combien il veoyait clair en ses affaires.

Ille solus nescit omnia.

Ie ne sçache homme qui peust apporter plus de parties, et naturelles, et acquises, propres à conserver la maistrise, qu'il faict ; et si, en est descheu comme un enfant ; partant l'ay ie choisy, parmy plusieurs telles conditions

que ie cognois, comme plus exemplaire. Ce seroit matiere à une question scholastique, "s'il est ainsi mieulx, ou aultrement." En presence, toutes choses luy cedent ; et laisse lon ce vain cours à son auctorité, qu'on ne luy resiste iamais. On le croit, on le craint, on le respecte, tout son saoul. Donne il congé à un valet ? il plie son pacquet, le voylà party ; mais hors de devant luy seulement ; les pas de la vieillesse sont si lents, les sens si troublés, qu'il vivra et fera son office en mesme maison, un an, sans estre apperçeu. Et quand la saison en est, on faict venir des lettres loingtaines, piteuses, suppliantes, pleines de promesses de mieulx faire ; par où on le remet en grace. Monsieur faict il quelque marché ou quelque despesche qui desplaise ? On la supprime, forgeant tantost aprez assez de causes pour excuser la faulte d'execution ou de response. Nulles lettres estrangieres ne luy estants premierement apportées, il ne veoid que celles qui semblent commodes à sa science. Si, par cas d'adventure, il les saisit, ayant en coustume de se reposer sur certaine personne de les luy lire, on y treuve sur le champ ce qu'on veult ; et faict on, à touts coups, que tel luy demande pardon, qui l'injurie par sa lettre. Il ne veoid enfin ses affaires que par une image disposee et desseignee, et satisfactoire le plus qu'on peult, pour n'esveiller son chagrin et son corroux [1] (ii. c. 8).

[1] Such a one I have known, who, having been very imperious in his youth, when he came to be old, though he might have lived at his full ease and had his judgment as entire as ever, would yet torment himself and others ; strike, rant, swear, and curse ; the most tempestuous master in France ; fretting himself with unnecessary suspicion and vigilance. And all this rumble and clutter but makes his family cheat him the sooner and the more : of his barn, his kitchen, cellar, nay, and his very purse too, others have the greatest use and share, whilst he keeps his keys in his bosom much more carefully than his eyes. Whilst he hugs himself with the frugality of the pitiful pittance of a wretched niggardly table, everything goes to wrack and ruin in

Here is the other illustration: beautiful alike for the simple and most touching description of the old man's inconsolable self-reproach, and for the involuntary burst of thankfulness and consolation after it, which the remembrance of Montaigne's own lost friendship brought along with it to his own mind:—

Feu Monsieur le Mareschal de Montluc, ayant perdu son fils, qui mourut en l'isle de Maderes, brave gentilhomme, a la verité, et de grande esperance, me faisoit fort valoir, entre ses aultres regrets, le desplaisir et crevecœur qu'il sentoit, de ne s'estre jamais communiqué à luy; et sur cette humeur d'une gravité et grimace paternelle, avoir perdu la commodité de gouster et bien cognoistre son fils,

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every corner of his house, in play, drink, all sorts of profusion, making sports in their junkettings with his vain anger and fruitless parsimony. Every one is a sentinel against him; and if by accident any wretched fellow that serves him is of another humour, and will not join with the rest, he is presently rendered suspected to him, a bait which old age very easily bites at of itself. How often has this gentleman boasted to me in how great awe he kept his family, and how exact an obedience and reverence they paid him! How clearly he saw into his own affairs!

Ille solus nescit omnia.

"He alone knows nothing of the matter."

I do not know any one that can muster more parts, both natural and acquired, proper to maintain such a dominion, than he; yet he is fallen from it like a child. For this reason it is that I have picked him out amongst several others that I know of the same humour, for the greatest example. It were matter for a question in the schools, "Whether he is better thus or otherwise?" In his presence all submit to and bow before him, and give so much way to his vanity that nobody ever resists him; he has his belly-full of cringe, and all postures of fear, submission, and respect. Does he turn away a servant? he

et aussi de lui declarer l'extreme amitié qu'il luy portoit, et le digne jugement qu'il faisoit de sa vertu. "Et ce pauvre garçon, disoit-il, n'a rien veu de moy qu'une contenance renfrongnée et pleine de mespris; et a emporté cette creance, que ie n'ay sceu ny l'aimer ny l'estimer selon son merite. A qui gardois ie à descouvrir cette singuliere affection qui ie luy portois dans mon ame? estoit ce pas lui qui en debvoit avoir tout le plaisir et toute l'obligation? Ie me suis contrainct et gehenné pour maintenir ce vain masque; et y ait perdu le plaisir de sa conversation, et sa volonté quand et quand, qu'il ne me peult avoir portée aultre que bien froide, n'ayant jamais receu de moy que rudesse, ny senty qu'une façon tyrannique." Ie treuve que cette plaincte estoit bien prinse et raisonnable; car, comme ie sçais par une trop certaine experience, il n'est aulcune si doulce consolation en la

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packs up his bundle, and is gone,—but 'tis no further than just out of his sight: the pace of old age is so slow, and the senses so weak and troubled, that he will live and do his old office in the same house a year together without being perceived. And after a fit interval of time, letters are pretended to come from a great way off, very pitiful, suppliant, and full of promises of amendment, by virtue of which he is again received into favour. Does monsieur make any bargain, or send away any despatch that does not please? 'Tis suppressed, and causes afterwards forged to excuse the want of execution in the one or answer in the other. No strange letters are first brought to him; he never sees any but those that seem fit for his knowledge. If by accident they fall first into his own hand, being used to trust somebody to read them to him, he reads extempore what he thinks fit, and very often makes such a one ask him pardon, who abuses and rails at him in his letter. In short, he sees nothing but by an image prepared and designed beforehand, and the most satisfactory they can invent, not to rouse and awake his ill-humour and choler. I have, under different forms, seen enough of long and enduring management to just the same effect.

perte de nos amis, que celle que nous apporte la science de n'avoir rien oublié à leur dire, et d'avoir en avecques eulx une parfaicte et entiere communication. O mon amy ! en vaulx ie mieux d'en avoir le goust ? ou si i'en vaulx moins ? I'en vaulx, certes, bien mieulx ; son regret me console et m'honore : est ce pas un pieux et plaisant office de ma vie, d'en faire a tout iamais les obseques ? est il iouissance qui vaille cette privation ?[1] (ii. c. 8).

But Montaigne's strength and weakness, his truthfulness and slipperiness, are most illustrated in his treatment of the theme which has made his name famous. It is a theme which few have ventured on, without being made dizzy by it and tempted into the "falsehood of extremes"; few who have ventured, have been able to keep their head calm, their thoughts steady, and their statements sober; yet there is none which we feel to supply so sure a test whether a man dares and is able to look widely and deeply into the world about him. It is the theme of

[1] The late Marshal de Montluc, having lost his son, who died in the Island of Madeira, in truth a very brave gentleman, and of great expectation, did to me, amongst his other regrets, very much insist upon what a sorrow and heart-breaking it was to him that he had never made himself familiarly acquainted with him ; and by that humour of fatherly gravity and grimace, had lost the opportunity of having an insight into, and of well knowing, his son ; as also of letting him know the extreme affection he had for him, and the worthy opinion he had of his virtue. "The poor boy," said he, "never saw in me other than a stern and disdainful countenance ; and is gone in a belief that I neither knew how to love or esteem him according to his desert. For whom did I reserve the discovery of that singular affection I had for him in my soul ? Was it not he himself who ought to have had all the pleasure of it, and all the obligation ?

the Book of Ecclesiastes: the real value of human life and greatness; the comparison of man's doings and aims with the immensities of the universe; the measure of his knowledge, of the depth and strength of its foundations, and of his power to know.

Few men have had the courage to look so boldly and to report so unflinchingly on these questions as Montaigne. The subject of his longest and most elaborate Essay is the uncertainty, the contradictions, the fickleness, and the failures of the human intellect, both in its ordinary exercise and in its most perfect forms. And it is a chord on which he strikes strongly and obstinately in all his writings. Nowhere do those misgivings, as to the completeness and permanent definitiveness of all mortal judgments, which visit even the clearest and surest mind in the very moment of its triumph, find so full an echo. Nowhere are the doubts so keenly expressed, which the endless varia-

I forced and wracked myself to put on and maintain this vain disguise, and have by that means deprived myself of the pleasure of his conversation, and, I doubt, in some measure, of his affection; which could not but be very cold towards me, having never other from me than austerity, nor felt other than a tyrannical manner of proceeding." I find this complaint to be rational and rightly apprehended; for as I myself know, by too certain experience, there is not so sweet a consolation in the loss of friends as the consciousness of having had no reserve with them, to have had with them a perfect and entire communication. Oh, my friend! am I the better for being sensible of this; or am I the worse? I am doubtless much the better. I am comforted and honoured in the sorrow for his death. Is it not a pious, a pleasing office of my life to be always upon my friend's obsequies? Can there be any joy equal to this privation?

tions and divergences of human thought on the nearest and most familiar of subjects inspire as to its capacity for attaining truth. Nowhere are we made to feel so forcibly, and often so uncomfortably, how little the pure exercise of reason often has, or can have, to do with the opinions which are most characteristic of us, and which we think irrefragable; and in how great a measure unsuspected or unacknowledged influences work insensibly, and tell in the long run, in the formation of conclusions, for which a stately and elaborate structure of reasons has been laboriously built up. The uncertainty and vanity of human knowledge was the master-thought of Montaigne's mind. It was impressed on his writings. It was inscribed in sentences, divine and human, from Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and St. Paul, from Lucretius, Sextus Empiricus, and Pliny, on the rafters and mouldings of his library.[1] It suggested the choice of his device and interrogative motto, an even balance with "*Que sçais je?*"—not daring to *assert* even his ignorance.

Much of what he says on this subject bears the impress of deep and genuine feeling. Pascal himself, whose mind on one side of it was greatly moulded by Montaigne, and who owes many of his thoughts to him,[2] did not conceive more vividly and more

[1] These are given in John Sterling's article in the *Westminster Review*, and more completely in Doctor Payen's *Nouveaux Documens sur Montaigne*, p. 56.

[2] See, besides the *Pensées* themselves, St. Beuve's chapters on Montaigne and Pascal. (*Port Royal*, ii. l. 3, c. 1-3.)

solemnly of the littleness of man, in comparison with the powers and activities incalculable all round him, the everlasting roll of the world, and that awful, far-off, ever-extending Infinity, "*ces effroyables espaces*," by which he is on all sides touched and enclosed, and in the depths of which he is sunk. Again, Montaigne's picture of human power and character brings out with a rare and bold distinctness how much there always is of variety, of inconstancy, of swaying to and fro, of unexplored alloy and mixture, in the most uniform and the strongest; and how widely in true history and actual life inconsistencies which are irreconcilable in words coexist, and results which baffle anticipation and defy analysis issue forth from causes which seemed so decisive and energetic. "Certes c'est un subject merveilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant que l'homme; il est malaysé d'y fonder jugement constant et uniforme,"[1] is a reflection which in substance will recur to many when they meet with the peremptory and opposite verdicts which are current in books and society. And when Montaigne lays his finger with such nice and sure exactness on that which causes the precariousness of all but the outlines of even the most authentic history,[2] —when he follows up the vast and majestic stream of law and justice to the inconsiderable cases, the chance conveniences, the narrow customs, the arbitrary rules, from which that mighty volume began to flow, —when he sets forth the difficulties and deep obscurity

[1] i. c. 1, p. 10. [2] i. c. 20, p. 114; ii. c. 10, p. 574.

which surround the attempt to fathom the nature of the human soul, and the so familiar yet so mysterious co-operation of the spiritual with the material part of man, he speaks the thoughts which come at times to all reflecting men, and which are the upshot and conclusion of many a long meditation. He does not arrest attention so much in the set positions which he offers for proof, or in the structure of the proof itself, as in the detached remarks, which he throws off as he goes along. These—thoughts full of light and sharpness of form and natural force, which spring to life about his path, and which witness to his observant and piercing eye—show that Montaigne wrote, because he felt in very deed the wonders and perplexities of this mortal condition.

But if, often, Montaigne's thoughts of our condition and our knowledge chime in with what has been felt and expressed by some of the strongest and deepest minds, at other times they wear a very different look. Such thoughts may lead in many directions. They may lead on to the solemn and composed conviction of practical duty which is seen in Butler. They may lead on to the bold philosophy of Pascal, which contrasts and combines them with the most exalted thoughts of the destiny and powers of man, to form a foundation for that religion which acknowledges and harmonises both. They may lead on to the still bolder attempt to base Faith on the entire discrediting of Reason. They may lead on to the attempt, begun and continued in patient earnestness, to unravel and

untie the knots which usually are cut; to bring to a just measure too wide assertions, both as to man's power and his imbecility; to question and sift and reconcile appearances which, taken by themselves, tempt into opposite falsehoods; to limit with precision where haste and impatience have led to absolute denial, or absolute assertion; to seek if the line cannot be found which separates between the provinces where man can and where he cannot know, where he has the guidance of probabilities, and where his light is faith. Or, on the contrary, these keen perceptions of the strangeness of the commonest things; of the smallness of our ordinary views of the world; of the mystery of first truths and principles; of the force with which our minds are kept in the groove of common opinions; of the power of custom; of the instability of principles, ideas, beliefs, in the unfolding of a character and in the generations of mankind; of the endlessly varying and contradictory interpretations to which the most important as well as the most trivial subjects are exposed in the debates of reason; of the absence of any recognised criterion of certainty,—these may lead on the persuasion that everything in human life is floating, everything is the result of random accident; that there is no law, nor truth, nor duty to claim allegiance. Or they may lead on to a lazy, good-natured, contented scepticism, which takes the world as it comes, and finds its amusement in the tremendous riddles which the world presents. In Montaigne's case they led to the last. Something,

perhaps a great deal, is to be put down to the influence of those evil days in which he lived—days in which, long before Louis XIV. or the Regency, the corruption and downward course of French society began. It was a time of change and breaking up in France as in other countries; but in France alone did that time of change seem for a while to have loosed every tie which bound men to men, or man to God. In such a bewildering spectacle, when men "formed and fashioned themselves to dissimulation as to an exercise of honour," and denied in every action, public and private, of their lives, the religion for which they professed to convulse the state and slaughter their countrymen, it is hardly wonderful to find a man like Montaigne, who hated the Reformation because of its troubles and inconsistencies, but had eagerly caught at and claimed for himself its congenial liberty of thought, advising the defenders of the old faith to employ, as their most certain resource in controversy against the inconvenient dogmatisers of the new, the weapon of universal scepticism. But the evil influences of those unhappy times acted on a character which was in some respects too well adapted to feel their power. Montaigne felt the attractions of truth, but none of its obligations. Lofty and clear in his idea of it, curious in his inquiries, fastidious in his tests, and not easily put off with its counterfeits, he hated responsibility, and would not submit to the trouble of having a purpose. Uncertainty, so far from dis-

turbing him, was a real pleasure; he revelled in it. He is whimsically pathetic in his description of the torment he felt in having to make up his mind,[1] or to commit himself; anything that fixed and tied him down, anything that required the effort and tension of his mind, he revolted from with fear and disgust. The idea of duty, with its attendant necessities of decision and of labour, was his bugbear and scarecrow. To hunt after truth as his pastime and sport was quite according to his taste; to hunt after it as his duty was as completely the opposite. He was the sworn enemy of all constraint, whether it were a constraint that confined the range and variations of his judgment, or a constraint that imposed on him the obligation of attention and method. To such a mind, which thoroughly enjoyed the liberty of taking one view of a subject to-day, with the reserved right and avowed anticipation of taking another to-morrow; which found the most delightful exercise of its natural subtlety in hovering about contrarieties and exaggerating difficulties, and carefully avoided bringing them to a point and issue; which shrunk with the loathing of an escaped galley-slave from all enforced trouble and work, in great things and small, the care of his property and the politics of the day, in his books, his business, his *ménage*, his writing; which steadily declined and put away the thought that he was bound in this world to anything, but to indulge the bent of his genius, and study himself, his repose, and

[1] v. ii. c. 17, pp. 338, 354.

his diseases,—this keen scrutiny of the perplexities and realities of life was no wholesome employment. Montaigne's practical lesson is, that man was not made for truth, and does not want it; that he may go through life very well without truth, and without the pains of looking for it; that if he is fool enough to be anxious and in earnest about it, he will but bring himself into endless difficulties, merely at the end to lose his labour; but that he will find it a pleasant and healthful exercise to turn his inquiries after it into an amusing toy, to be taken up and laid down as a change from his other pleasures.

Of course he abundantly contradicts his own lesson. No one could write with the just insight and truthful force which he possessed, without perpetually witnessing to that idea of attainable truth which nature will not part with, and which returns unawares, and even in spite of their vigilance, to the most resolutely sceptical. But his good sense and good feeling could not prevent his indolence and his pampered acuteness, which he was too self-indulgent to bring to the test of an exact and painful trial of thought, from entangling him in mistakes and follies as extravagant and as degrading as those of the dogmatical philosophers whose narrowness and positiveness he laughed at. When he wants to prove the impossibility of scientific truth, he heaps together an indiscriminate mass of opposite opinions, with the name of some philosopher attached to each; he enumerates them in their bare, isolated, dogmatic shape; he passes in review before

you, the most inconceivable follies which the human mind has been guilty of, mixed up in the same company with its keenest anticipations and deepest thoughts; he has made no attempt to understand or weigh their several reasons or theory; he gives them all as of equal value, without any sifting, or distinguishing, or grouping; he does not ask whether one has any more probability than another, whether one is an idle guess, and another the result, inadequate perhaps, of solid and careful thinking; but he gives an eloquent sketch of the collective strength and accomplishments of their authors, and then, his catalogue of contradictions, as the best that these great minds could produce; and chuckles over it all with the reflection—"*qui fagotterait suffisamment un amas des asneries de l'humaine sapience, il dirait merveilles.*" No doubt he might; but he might also show that he was himself a trifler, mocking at what he had not the patience nor the qualification to criticise, either in its weakness or its strength. To establish the universal failure of science, to prove the entire waste of the time, and uselessness of the efforts, which the greatest minds have spent in learning to know, is not less foolish, as it is more disingenuous, than the vainest panegyric on the triumphs of human wisdom. Montaigne had no taste for what was severe and methodical, rigidly confined as to subject and technical in form; and he had not the energy and endurance for it, if he had had the taste. But he had penetration enough to discern, if he had chosen,

both the true meaning and the greatness of those conquests of human thought, which he preferred to laugh at, as a mass of contradictions disguised by a stiff and shallow pedantry. Montaigne gloats over the pitiable and hopeless fatuity of poor human reason, and announces his purpose of beating down and trampling under foot every thought of its power and achievements. Pascal sympathises with his merciless onslaught, and applauds it with almost ferocious exultation. But both do it by virtue of that very power which they are flouting; and neither the originality and easy frankness of Montaigne, nor the fervent earnestness and religious purpose of Pascal, can disguise the deep and cruel untruth of their declamations, or prevent us from feeling that such insolent and intemperate scorn of that greatest of gifts which they are themselves using, does not become less unnatural and revolting even from the lips of genius and faith.

The question has been variously answered, whether Montaigne was a Christian believer? The answer, whichever way given, must "be subject," to use his phrase, "to a long interpretation." It does not follow from his sceptical depreciation of human knowledge, that he was not; for Pascal adopts his line of thought, and turns it into a foundation for religious conviction. And it is certain that Montaigne professes, without any appearance of bad faith, the language of a Christian; indeed, his famous sceptical Essay, the *Apology for Raimond de Sebond*, is a clumsy attempt, at least

ostensibly, to make out the same sort of argument for religion, on which Pascal afterwards put forth his power of clear and subtle statement; and when Montaigne expired in the act of adoration, at the moment of the elevation of the holy Sacrament, it is certain that he did nothing but what was consistent with the tenor of his avowed belief. His contemporaries do not seem to have doubted about it; and the *Essais*, with some slight exceptions taken to his use of the word Fortune, his ideas about education, his quotations from heretical poets like Beza and Marot, his apology for Julian and his denunciation of torture, amusing exceptions, it must be owned, passed muster in his lifetime at Rome.[1] And it may be added that he continually expresses the greatest dislike and fear of the Reformers, as men guilty of unsettling what they can never again build up; and strongly warns his own party against paring away articles of their own belief, in order to make their ground apparently more easy to hold. If this tends to supply an affirmative answer to the question, it may further be observed, that Montaigne was not a man to profess to believe what he knew he did not believe. I apprehend that Montaigne did consider himself an honest Catholic; and that he would have been very much surprised and shocked if any one had called him an unbeliever. But if the question be about the quality of his belief, it might be more difficult to get the same answer.

[1] They were afterwards, in the time of the disputes about relaxed morality, put in the Index.

His views both of life and death are absolutely and entirely unaffected by the fact of his professing to believe the Gospel. He touches on a hundred subjects, where its principles or its disclosures make all the difference to the question, and settle one way or another what before was doubtful; but he steadily ignores it all, and persists in knowing no more than Plutarch and Seneca might have known. Confined between birth and death is all that he will recognise of the life, the hopes, the training, the morality, the business of man. No one has spoken of death more solemnly, more feelingly, more bravely, in that simple relation to our life here, which is one of its aspects, and one which our human nature compels us, whether we will or no, to acknowledge, with awful apprehensions, as a seeming end and dissolution; but there is another aspect of it, one which nature and reason suggest, but which to a Christian thinker offers itself at every turn; and of this one, Montaigne writes as if no such imagination had ever been brought before his mind. It is only when he is disparaging the natural arguments for immortality, that he makes as it were the *salvo*, that immortality has been revealed to faith. Never does a thought, an emotion, an anticipation tinged with the reflection of Christian light escape from him. And yet he is not altogether silent about religion. But he has the power of suspending absolutely his belief and the natural effect it would have on a thoughtful mind busy with man's nature and fortunes; he lodges it apart, and above

him, in dignity and honour, but where it has no more influence on the temptations, the troubles, the issues of the real world than the gods of the Epicurean heaven. His philosophy is a downright, straightforward, honest heathenism, with no more light or fears or scruples, than when Greeks and Romans worshipped a Pantheon which they did not believe. Yet I do not think that Montaigne thought himself like them. I believe that he thought his religion true, and the gift of God, but that he looked on it as a sort of art or mystery, with rules and grounds independent of and unconnected with the ordinary works or thoughts of life, as something to be applied or kept in reserve according as it was wanted, like a knowledge of geometry or astrology, but which was neither dishonoured nor betrayed, when taste or conscience or the impulses and activity of the mind kept it in abeyance, and for the time out of sight. As a layman, he disclaims a knowledge of theology; and along with the science of religion, he seems to think it natural that he should keep at arms-length religion itself, as long as it suits him. He speaks and argues, as Pascal says, on a supposition, but without binding himself to it, and he leaves himself at liberty to drop it when he likes. The phenomenon is not so rare at any time; but it is often strongly and curiously forced on our thoughts in many of those who in Montaigne's time meddled so busily with religion and the affairs of the world. The exaggerated shape in which it appears in him is due to that deeply-rooted indolence

and want of moral tone which betrays itself throughout. He did not care to bring in the ideas of religion, because his mind was preoccupied with a philosophy which, *without religion*, fitted in, he thought, to the course of man's life. He did not dare to look into religion and its claims lest he should find something which would perplex and dislocate his philosophy, or put him on the task of reconciling difficulties; something which would either tempt him to give up his religion, or else oblige him to accept it more in earnest and submit to it more thoroughly.[1]

[1] M. De St. Beuve, a very acute and subtle observer, and an impartial judge, ascribes to Montaigne the same kind of deliberate and crafty purpose, the "*méthode perfide*," which directed the doubts and pointed the irony of Bayle and Gibbon. "Il y a toute une comédie qu'il joue, et dont il ne prétend faire dupe que qui le veut bien." (*Port Royal*, ii. 426.) The effect is doubtless very much as if the design had been there: the central thought once suggested, it is easy to see its application everywhere, and it seems to give light and meaning to what is incoherent and indefinite. Montaigne may be read under this light, and no doubt often has been; and we often come upon passages which such a key fits exactly. But I cannot see in Montaigne the distinct *animus*, the clear *arrière pensée* of Bayle. I cannot see the indications of a foreseen, conscious purpose. It was hardly like Montaigne to have one. There are persons who can avoid coming to an explanation with themselves; who like to play with doubts and live in one kind of atmosphere of thought and feeling, without cutting themselves off from a retreat into a very different one, if advisable. It seems most accordant with the facts, to view Montaigne as one of these. His activity and interest belonged to heathenism; but he kept religion in the background in reserve, though he had no use for it at present.

In Montaigne we see that new intellectual liberty of his day, not knowing how to use itself, or to take care of itself; puzzled by what it saw, and by what it had to keep to; boldly dwelling on discrepancies, but too lazy and self-willed to try to penetrate them and reconcile them. He felt the obligation, cast on men by the times in which he lived, of learning *to think*, instead of repeating other men's words; but he did not feel the greatness of the purpose for which that obligation had been cast on them. He shows himself wonderfully little impeded by the customary prepossessions of his contemporaries, able with ease to break through what we looking back seem to see so clearly to have been the tangles and trammels of mere habit in his day,—the habit which made good men think torture a necessary and natural engine of law, and wise men take for granted that a cold distance and a savage drill was the only rational way of breeding up their children. But besides the keenness and good sense shown, Montaigne's thinking came to little. He broke up the ground which others after him sowed with many kinds of seed. He was a kind of imperfect Socrates, the cross-examiner of his generation,—bold, inquisitive, and shrewd, taking nothing on trust, and hating pretence,—homely, unconventional, untechnical,—with his idea right, but too careless, too selfish, and it must be added, not pure enough, not thorough enough, to give it effect; below Socrates in elevation and noble purpose, fifteen hundred years after an event which ought to have

made him wiser and more serious than Socrates. On one side, we are told that in him are to be found all the germs of that flippant and corrupt French philosophy which from Bayle to Voltaire confused and darkened the mind and heart of Europe.[1] On the other, we have a genuine and rich picture of human experience, thoughts, and utterances, fresh from the heart and sense, and full of a large and various and subtle wisdom, reminding us of the universality and strength of Bacon and Shakespeare. A wide and deep experience—and yet it is but a partial and limited one, for it knows nothing of Christian faith and Christian love. In Montaigne it is a wilful and self-chosen limiting. He admits the existence of something beyond the bounds of nature, but beyond those bounds he will not himself look. We read in him the history of the natural man, with his noble ideas and base instincts; his high and glorious standard, and his miserable fallings short; his aspirations after truth, and his endless wanderings into error; his feeling sure of the greatest things, and his uncertainty about the grounds of the smallest; his fluctuations and inconsistencies, his goodness, kindness, tenderness, bravery, self-devotion, sympathy; his wayward and fractious childishness, his bestial love of impurity, his want of purpose and self-government, his wanton sporting with what is wrong and dangerous and forbidden; his lofty vision of happiness and capacity for it, and his eternal disappointment.

[1] *Vide* his "Convoi," in St. Beuve. *Port Royal*, ii. 444.

Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man.

So first cried out the brave old stoic Roman; so answered with better reason the English poet in his Christian language. But to Montaigne it is only the mocking cry of an idle hope.[1] "It is making the handful greater than the hand can hold, and the armful larger than the arms can embrace, and the stride wider than the legs can stretch; man can but see with his eyes, and hold with his grasp." He remembers, indeed, that what is impossible with man is possible with God, and has been promised by Him; but are his words, true and noble as they sound, the real recantation of his despondency, or a decorous homage to a professed faith, at whose threshold his thoughts stop short? The *Essais* leave no doubt that the condemnation of the aspiration in Seneca is more genuine than the admission of its fulfilment in the Gospel.

[1] *Vide* end of the *Apology for Raimond de Sebond.* "Voilá un bon mot et un utile desir, et pareillement absurde; car de faire la poignée plus grande que le poing, la brassée plus grande que le bras, et d'esperer enjamber plus que de l'estendue de nos jambes, cela est impossible et monstrueux: ny que l'homme se monte audessus de soy et de l'humanité: car il ne peult veoir que de ses yeux, ny saisir que de ses prises. Il s'eslevera, si Dieu luy preste extraordinairement la main: il s'eslevera, abandonnant et renoncant à ses propres moyens, et se laissant hausser et soublever par les moyens purement celestes. C'est à nostre foy chrestienne, non à sa vertu stoicque, de pretendre à cette divine et miraculeuse metamorphose."

# BRITTANY [1]

[JANUARY 1846]

STEAM has done wonders, and promises more, for those who desire to see with their own eyes what is far off, and who delight in the contrast of juxtaposition between what is familiar and what is remote and strange. What it cannot bring to our door, it takes us most comfortably and without loss of time to see. It is making a raree-show of the world; exhibiting all that the present affords of wonderful, and magnificent, and curious, before those who are never out of the sound of their mother tongue, and are travellers only in the multiplicity of their portmanteaus. Before we have time to forget the express train and the railway-porters in velveteen, and Southampton Water and Netley Abbey and the Cowes

[1] 1. *Voyage dans la Finistère, par* CAMBRY: *nouvelle édition, par* M. Le Chev. DE FRÊMINVILLE. Brest: 1836.
2. *A Summer in Brittany: by* T. A. TROLLOPE, Esq., B.A. 2 Vols. London: 1840.
3. *Les Derniers Bretons: par* EMILE SOUVESTRE: *nouvelle édition.* Paris: 1843.
4. *La Bretagne, Ancienne et Moderne: par* PITRE-CHEVALIER. Paris: 1844.

yachts, we are brought face to face with the bounds of the old world, the pillars of Hercules, and look upon distant Atlas; another flight, and we are on the river of Egypt, in the land of Pharaoh and Cleopatra, of St. Athanasius and St. Antony; among the pyramids, amid turbans and the languages of the East. We have passed through the wilderness, and the waves of the Red Sea are breaking on the shore at our feet; and in a space of time no longer measured by months and weeks, but by days, and soon by hours and their fractions, we are in India. The first of the month saw us riding in an omnibus in Holborn, the last sees us in the land of elephants and pagodas. Steam will deny us nothing; in the circle round us, we have but to mark out our goal, and the genius straight transports us.

It puts us into communication with all the present; but not even steam can bring us to the past. In its way, indeed, it toils; it slaves for the antiquarian and the draughtsman; in letter-press, in form, in colour, it strives most assiduously to bring up the image of the past; it multiplies and disperses abroad. But the living past is not in books or engravings, and cannot be brought to us, nor we to it.

Only here and there, left to itself in some neglected corner of the world, the living past survives, projecting itself into the uncongenial and almost unconscious present. A couple of days off from Paris or Southampton, we may reach a race of men more difficult to piece on to modern society than those who live

by the Nile or the Ganges, or sell one another beneath the Line. Shooting out from the dim middle ages into the glare and bustle of the civilised "present day," in the midst of English manufactories, and French revolutions, and wars of the Empire—stretching forth its granite base into a sea ploughed by steam-ships, and itself planted all over with tri-coloured flags, dark old Brittany goes on unmoved, unsympathising,—believing and working as it and its fellow-nations did five hundred years ago. Surrounded by excitement and change,—sparkling Frenchmen vapouring about glory; drudging Englishmen, deep in railways; quarrelsome Yankee Locofocos, in a white heat about Oregon,—while all eyes are straining into the future, and all hearts are beating high with expectation,—the old-fashioned Breton eyes with the utmost unconcern these "heirs of all the ages, foremost in the files of time,"—combs his long black hair, and walks about unashamed in his *bragou-bras*,—turns his back on the future, and looks only on the past—on his dead ancestors and the cross; and profoundly distrusts all improvement in this world. A grand, sublime, miraculous Past, is contrasted in his mind with a poor uninteresting Present, its mere appendix, and a Future without form or hope till the Last Day; the past is to him the great reality of the world—the reality, not of dilettantism, of forced reverence, of partial or factitious interest, but of lifelong faith. Fixed, undeniable, stands the solid past, and he reflects and rehearses it as he can; the work of

present men is but vanity, their promised future a shadow. The progress of the ages, roughly as it has sometimes gone, has left him much as it found him, some considerable time before the Council of Trent.

"*Le pays le plus arriéré de la France!*" says the *commis-voyageur* from civilised Orleans or Rouen, to his neighbours in the barbarian diligence: and such is it likely to remain for some time longer, in spite of tri-color and steam-engine; in spite of the sneers and wares of *commis-voyageurs*, and interesting poetical accounts of the country by "*Bretons francisés;*" in spite of walking and reading parties from Oxford; in spite of departemental roads, and improving inns, and agricultural societies. The onslaught of civilisation is determined and full of hope—nay, it is progressive; statistics measure the encroachments of the French language upon the Breton, as we measure those of the sea, by leagues; but civilisation has a tough and intractable pupil, and does not get on fast with its work. It tells, to be sure, on the enlightened *bourgeois;* but the enlightened *bourgeois* cannot print their mark on the country or the population, or force themselves into notice. The peasantry represent Brittany as the middle classes represent England; they are the people of most will and character—a hard, silent, obstinate, impassive race, living in their own old world, and, in the lofty feeling of its antiquity, taking no reflection from that upstart one which mixes with them—almost ignoring it. Modern France has been struggling hard to pull them up to a respect-

able level in society; they shake their heads, and resist in silence. First the guillotine was tried—"*Quel torrent revolutionnaire que cette Loire!*"[1] wrote Carrier—Carrier of the *noyades;* "enraptured," adds the historian, "with the poetry of his crime:" but it would not do:—

> It was a war between the guillotine and belief; a murderous war, in which the guillotine used its knife, and was beaten. This contest did not, as in La Vendée, degenerate into a civil war; with some exceptions, Lower Brittany remained immovable; but remained on her knees, with clasped hands, in spite of all that could be done to hinder her. Nothing could impair the freshness of her primitive faith. She yielded neither to anger nor to fear. The *bonnet rouge* might be forced on her head, but not on her ideas.
>
> "I will have your church-tower knocked down," said Jean Bon-Saint-André to the Maire of a village, "that you may have no object to recall to you your old superstitions."—"Anyhow you will have to leave us the stars," replied the peasant, "and those we can see further off than our church-tower."—*Souvestre*, pp. 206, 207.

In the quieter times of the Directory, busy, fussy, sentimental citizen Cambry, "commissioned to detail the state, political, moral, and statistical, of the department of Finistère," plunged fearlessly into its bogs and thick darkness, philosophised, pitied, collected stories; found citizen-*Maires* in sabots, polite and attentive; had many interviews with ignorant but promising municipalities, suggested improvements, reported on capabilities,—hopeful, ardent, citizen

[1] Michelet, vol. i.

Cambry, filled with lofty compassion, devoted to the conversion of "*notre pauvre vieille Bretagne*" to civism and cleanliness: but, alas, citizen Cambry is dead of apoplexy, and civil *Maires* and municipalities have not realised the promises they gave; they still believe in their priests. The great imperial mind, which new-modelled France, tried his hand on Brittany,—tried to give it a centre; called Pontivy, after his own name, Napoléonville; began a new, broad, straight street among its crooked alleys; but the new street is unfinished, and Napoléonville has gone back to Pontivy.[1] Even the conscription did little: even captains in the imperial armies, when they got back to Basse Bretagne, resumed their sabots and baggy breeches, their *bragou-bras*. "We shall stay as we are," says a modern Breton writer, "till the rail-road drives through our villages of granite;"[2]—and, we cannot help thinking, for some time longer. The railway, and the navigators, its pioneers, will most assuredly produce some strange and strong impressions on the Breton peasants, and they will open their eyes and make the sign of the cross; it will enable, perhaps, navy officers from Brest, and merchants from St. Malo, to see more of their friends in Paris: but it will pass by the *villages*, the *foci* of Breton character and feeling. It will be a long time before the influence, which the railway brings with it, works upon them.

Still, the struggle is going on, and it is a curious

[1] Trollope, vol. i. p. 371. [2] Pitre-Chevalier.

spectacle to see the new intruding into the old, setting itself up by its side, fastening itself on to it, and slowly and cunningly—for the old is strong—edging it out. The new has now become discreet and cautious; the old looks on, dubious, unintelligent, mistrustful, but by no means in an imitative humour, doggedly keeping its old fashions. Paris has mapped out the old province into departments and *communes*, and *préfetures* and *sousprefetures;* the system is externally the same as in the rest of uniform new-fangled France; but the old ignored divisions are those which are felt. Parishes will maintain their isolation and singularities; Léon and Cornouaille still keep their ancient names, and continue distinct and hostile, though clamped together to make up Finistère. The contrast is grotesque: for instance, when the modern government machinery for improvement is at work amid the old Breton customs. The feast of the patron saint comes round; the people naturally collect, as they have done for centuries, to a wake,—as they call it, a *pardon*,—to gain an indulgence, to worship, to make merry. They collect from various parishes, and in various costumes nowhere else seen in the world,—men as well as women, long-haired, dark-vested, wild-looking men, talking gravely their old Celtic dialect, and a little bad French, and sounding their bagpipes. French civilisation meets them; M. le Maire and M. le Sousprefet issue their programmes; there shall be a "*Fête patronale*," a "*Fête agricole*." Government and agricultural societies are

full of encouragement; there are horse-races, matches between ploughs of the country and ploughs "*perfectionnées,*"—cattle shows for the improvement "*des races chevalines, bovines, ovines, et gallinacées;*" prizes are given, purses of francs, model ploughs, Bodin's *Elémens d'Agriculture.*—*Fortunati si bona nôrint,*—if instead of telling old-world stories, they could seize the opportunity and study "Bodin." Meanwhile, in the midst of enlightened civic authorities with tight pantaloons and peaked beards, they herd together, a wild crowd of Celts, thinking a good deal more of the *pardon*, and the dancing and wrestling, and the grand opportunity of getting drunk, than of improving themselves in agriculture. The same contrast meets you on the face of the country. You are tempted to turn aside from the road to look at an old parish church: there it is, open, and empty, and silent, except the invariable ticking of the clock; there is its charnel-house, and shelves of skulls, each with a name, and in a box by itself; its granite "Calvaire," with its hard Egyptian-looking figures; there is the votive lock of hair, or the holy spring; or the picture of a miracle of the last few years in the neighbourhood; or the rude weather-beaten image of the village saint, carved from the tree as it grew in the churchyard, about whom the peasant boys will tell you stories if you can understand them. You cross the ridge, full of the thoughts of old Brittany, and you come upon modern industry and enterprise at work,—smuggling merchants of some unheard-of little port, building

unaccountably extravagant basins and jetties; the engineer hanging his light and beautiful suspension bridge, high over the large blue oily eddies of one of the tide rivers which tear the jagged coast-line, pushing his communications over the obstacles which annoyed Cæsar—"*pedestria itinera concisa æstuariis.*" Or you come to a chosen stage of innovation and modern fashion,—the modern race-course,—the "Hippodrome," which is the pride of Landerneau and the envy of Quimper; here are all the appliances of the French turf, the course marked out, the seats for the Préfet, and the seats for the musicians; and in the midst, a gaunt, weather-stained, stone cross, to which the peasant, as he passes it, pulls off his hat.

Nevertheless, whatever lodgment civilisation may have made, people curious in these matters are yet in time to see a very fair specimen of a middle-age population,—a peasantry, that is,—for, as we have said, the towns-people except in the more remote parts, or in the lowest rank, are simply French of a mongrel sort. The look, indeed, of some of the towns carries us back some centuries: the old burgher houses, for instance, at Lannion and Morlaix; or Dinan, with its walled town on the hill, and its suburb straggling up the hill side, with a street as steep and narrow and feudal-looking as in the days of Du Guesclin; but all this may easily be matched in other parts of the continent. Old Brittany is outside the towns.

"Poor rough Brittany," writes Michelet, "the element

of resistance in France, extends her fields of quartz and schist, from the slate-quarries of Châteaulin, near Brest, to the slate-quarries of Angers. This is her extent, geologically speaking. However, from Angers to Rennes, the country is a *debateable* land, a *border* like that between England and Scotland, which early escaped from Brittany. The Breton tongue does not even begin at Rennes, but about Elven, Pontivy, Loudéac, and Châtelaudren. Thence, as far as the extremity of Finistère, it is true Brittany—*Bretagne bretonnante*, a country which has become alien to our own, exactly because it has remained too faithful to our original condition; so Gaulish, that it is scarcely French,—a country which would have slipped from us more than once, had we not held it fast, clenched and gripped as in a vice, between four French cities, rough and stout Nantes and St. Malo, Rennes and Brest."[1]

It is to this part of Brittany, where the old language is still preserved, that our remarks are meant to apply. Even in this part, there are many differences, between the four old Bishoprics of Léon, Tréguier, Cornouaille, and Vannes,—certainly of dialect; it is said, also, of character. Still, though each parish has its peculiarities and costume, and Tréguier may be more ribald, and Cornouaille dirtier and more light-hearted, than sombre Léon, there is a sufficient uniformity about them to allow of our speaking of them together.

One feature is common to them all—their religion. In these times of unbelief, or of a faith which, perhaps, for self-protection, is sparing of outward show and sign, it is a solemn and awful sight to see a whole

[1] Michelet, *Hist. de France.* (Engl. tr.)

population, visibly, and by habit, religious; believing in God, and instinctively showing their belief all day long, and in all possible circumstances. Their faith may, or may not, restrain and purify them—it need not necessarily; but in Brittany, there it is, not a formula, but a spirit penetrating every corner and cranny of their character and life, free, unaffected, undisguised, not shrinking from the homeliest contacts and most startling conclusions, matching itself without stint or fear with every other reality. The sight, we repeat, is very subduing to those who have lived where nothing but the present world is assumed and referred to, in the forms and language of ordinary intercourse; where society is ever silent about God, and nothing that men do or say in their usual business, implies His existence. To such persons, this perpetual recognition of His name and power, so uniformly, and often so unexpectedly, is like an evidence to the senses—a result and warning of the nearness of His presence.

Brittany is a religious country, if ever the term could be applied to a country. The Church has set her seal on land and people. How she gained over these tough, stubborn, dark-thoughted people is not the least wonderful question in her history. Her conquest is best explained by the countless legends of self-sacrifice and gospel labour, which the Breton calendar has of its own. But once gained, they pay no divided allegiance; and if the outlines of their faith are coarse, they seem indelible. The feeling that

they are Christians is ever present to them; they delight in the title. Their most popular songs are religious. Even their tragedies begin in the Most Holy name. The cross is everywhere: the beggar traces it on his morsel before he touches it; on all things, animate or inanimate, which are turned to the use of man, its mark is placed; it is set up in granite at the cross-road, on the moor, on the shifting sands, where, as long as it is in sight above the waves, the passenger need not fear the tide—"*puisque*," says his guide, "*la croix nous voit.*"

Even the brute creation is brought within the hallowed circle—they have to fast with men on Christmas Eve, and they receive a blessing of their own from the Church: the very dogs, when they are sick, have a patron saint. The people may smile or joke themselves; but they do not the less believe. The speculator from civilised France, who comes to improve in Brittany, finds, to his cost, that nothing can shake this faith. Say, he has to finish a sea-wall before the next spring-tide; there remains but one day:—

The evening before, as the workmen were going from their work, a carter came to tell me that he could not bring his team to-morrow, because it was the *fête* of St. Eloi, and he must take his horses to hear Mass at Landerneau; another came soon after with the same tidings; then a third, then a fourth, at last all. I was alarmed: I explained to them the danger of waiting; I entreated; I got into a rage; I offered to double, to treble the wages of their work: but it was no use. They listened atten-

tively, entered into all my reasons, approved them, and ended by repeating that they could not come because their horses would die if they did not hear the Mass of St. Eloi. I had to resign myself. Next day the spring-tide rose, covered the unfinished works, flooded the whole bay, and swept away the dyke, as it ebbed. This Mass cost me 30,000 francs.—*Souvestre*, p. 433.

They have not yet learnt the powers which God's wisdom has, in these last days, placed in the hands of man. In Brittany still, as in those Middle Ages which it reflects, men feel that God only is strong, and that they are weak—helpless in a world of dangers—among irresistible and unknown powers, where God only can help them. "My God, succour me: my bark is so little, and Thy sea is so great;" so prays the Breton sailor as he passes the terrible cape, the *Bec du Raz*—and he speaks the universal feeling. He sees nothing between himself and the hand of God. He is still in the days of the Bible: he realises the invisible world without effort, he is deeply interested in it, he has his scruples, his fears, his axioms about it, as his civilised contemporaries have about the order of *their* world. They take for granted their own power, and trouble themselves about no other. He delivers himself up in his weakness, almost passively, into the hands of God. His submission, his intense conviction of the sorrows of this world, would almost amount to fatalism, were it not for his faith in the power of prayer.

"It is only within a few years," says M. Souvestre, and we believe he does not over-colour the case—"that

physicians have been employed in the country districts; even now confidence in them is far from being general. Some traditional medicines, prayers, masses at the parish church, vows to the best-known saints, are the remedies mostly used. Every Sunday at service time, you may see women with eyes red with weeping, going up to the altar of the Virgin, with tapers, which they light and place there; they are sisters or wives who come to beg some dear life, of her in heaven, who, like themselves, has known the cost of tears shed over a bier. You can tell by counting these tapers, which burn with a pale light upon the altar, how many souls there are in the parish ready to quit the earth."—*Souvestre*, pp. 9, 10.

The stern resignation to which this faith leads, this steady acquiescence in suffering as the order of Providence, puts out the political economist sadly. The Breton peasant or workman, strange to say, unlike his brethren in England or France, does not care to mend his condition. He is firmly persuaded that it is all one where he is, in this world,—a broad heroic view of things, though a partial and wrong one; but very maddening to speculators on "capabilities" and "resources." There the peasant sits in his hovel by his fireside, silent and grave, moaning and dreaming about things invisible and days gone by, chanting his monotonous mournful poetry, making his coarse cloth, which no one wants to buy of him. It is no use telling him that his manufacture is too rude, that his market is gone—his father made cloth before him, and, whether it sells or not, he cannot give over making it. "*Dans notre famille nous avons toujours été fabricants de toiles.*" Arguments are beaten

back by the recollection of past days—"*Dans notre famille nous avons été riches autrefois;*" and when he can no longer resist the assertion that times are changed, he sighs and says—"*C'est le bon Dieu qui conduit le pauvre monde.*"—"After that, press him no more; you have reached the end of his arguments, you have driven him back on Providence; to any further objections he will make no answer."[1] Yet at this very moment he has not given up the hope that the old days will come back; he can see no reason why they should not. He dreams of his new coat of brown cloth that he will "purchase, and of the silver dishes that he will substitute for his wooden spoons—these silver dishes are the utmost stretch of the Breton workman's ambitious visions. This point reached, he goes to sleep in his rapture; and the next morning, cold and hunger awaken him as usual at sunrise, and he resumes the toils and bitter realities of his daily life."[2]

But there are times when this heavy, narrow-minded, melancholy, lethargic drudge, who drones and pines while others work, rises and fills out into a breadth and grandeur of character, when all other men are helpless and despicable with terror. The cholera, when it was in the province, drew forth to the full the Breton peasant, his nobleness and his folly,—his faith and uncomplaining resignation; his obstinate distrust of all that comes through man,—and both in exaggerated proportions. We quote

[1] Souvestre, p. 368. [2] *Ibid.* p. 369.

from M. Souvestre: after speaking of the cry of the Paris mob, that the government had poisoned the provisions, he goes on:—

In Brittany, where the government, its form and name, are almost unknown, and parties are political only because they are religious, it was naturally otherwise. Any one who had told our peasants that government was poisoning them, would scarcely have been understood. For them, there are but two powers, God and the devil,—they looked not to criminal conspiracies for the cause of the evil which smote them. "*The finger of God has touched us;*" "*God has delivered us to the devil;*" this was their energetic language. And forthwith the report was spread in the country, of supernatural apparitions,—red women had been seen near Brest, breathing the pestilence over the valleys. A beggar woman maintained before the magistrates, "that she had seen them—had spoken with them." Menacing signs gave warning that God was about to cast His "*evil air*" over the country;—the churches were opened, and the people awaited, without taking any precautions, the fearful guest, whose approach was announced to them. I asked the priest of one of the parishes in the Léonais, what precautions he had taken. As we were leaving the church, he silently pointed with his hand, and showed me *twelve pits ready opened.*

The cholera soon came, and came with fury:—

But the peasant of Léon, accustomed to hard trials, bowed his head beneath the scourge. Once only the murmur of grief and discontent was heard in our country districts; it was when, for fear of contagion, it was proposed to bury those who died of cholera in the cemeteries of remote chapels. The relations and friends of the dead collected round the coffin, and opposed its removal from the parish churchyard, which already contained the bones

of those whom he loved. Indeed, in some places, it was not without danger that the new orders were carried into effect: these men who disdain to wrangle about their place in life, disputed with eagerness for their place in the churchyard. You should have heard their words in this strange, long dispute, to know the depth of those hearts. "The remains of our fathers are here," they repeated; "why separate him who is just dead? Banished down there to the burying-ground of the chapel, he will hear neither the chants of the service nor the prayers which ransom the departed. Here is his place. We can see his grave from our windows; we can send our smallest children every evening to pray here; this earth is the property of the dead, no power can take it from them, or exchange it for another." In vain people spoke of the danger of the accumulation of corpses in the parish churchyard, always in the middle of the village, and surrounded with houses. They shook their large heads sadly, and their flowing hair. "Corpses do not kill those who are alive," they answered; "death does not come except by the will of God." At last it became necessary to apply to the priests to overcome their resistance; and all the authority of the priests themselves was scarcely enough to make them yield to the change. I shall never forget having heard the rector at Taulé talking long to them about it, and assuring them, in the name of God, whom he represented, that the dead had not the feelings of the living, and did not suffer by this separation from the graves of their forefathers. These explanations, which would have made one smile under other circumstances, took so strange a character of seriousness, from the air of conviction in the priests, and the intense attention of the crowd, that they left no feeling but that of extreme amazement and involuntary awe.—*Souvestre*, pp. 14-17.

These views of life are not the views of a soft and tender-hearted people. The Breton who suffers un-

moved, looks unmoved on suffering in others. He may help or not, as it may be; he will not waste many words or much compassion. But the Church, which has not made him feel for suffering as such, has impressed, like an instinct on his soul, that deep reverence for earthly humiliation, which since the Sermon on the Mount she has never forgotten. The roughest and hardest Breton wrecker never turned away from the beggar—"*hôte du bon Dieu*," who visits his hovel, or who sits praying and begging by the wayside or the church door. He sees in him one touched by the "finger of God"—this moves him, though physical suffering does not. And that touching faith of early times is still strong among them which reverenced the idiot; which believed him to be in grace, and sought his intercession because he could do no sin; which, because of the extremity of his degradation, felt sure that the All-merciful was with him, and would visit one who was so humbled in the eyes of men. The most famous church in Brittany was raised to consecrate the memory of one of them. Every one who travels there, hears wherever he goes of the renown of the *Folgöat*—the work of the glorious days of Brittany, now scathed and battered by the Revolution: where, instead of the princely convent, a few *Sœurs de la Providence* educate poor children—"*les filles des misérables.*" And though English taste may think it over-rated, it is a noble church,—with its two towers and spires of pierced granite, and its line of five altars, along the eastern

wall, carved with the most exquisite beauty, of the sharp, dark, gray *Kersanton*. The legend which led to the building of this church, shall be given as it was read in the church itself.[1] We shall not be surprised at our readers smiling, or, if it is worth while, condemning; but we think they will be touched, at least, by the manner in which it is told.

On the Sunday before All Saints, 1370, deceased the blessed Salaun, or Solomon, vulgarly called the Fool, because he was taken for one naturally dull, and wanting reason, having never been able to learn anything save only these two words, "*Ave Maria*," which he would say and repeat without ceasing. This poor innocent had made for himself a wretched dwelling beneath a great tree, whereof the branches were very low, and were to him for a roof and walls. There he lived by himself, lying on the bare ground; and when he was hungry, going through the town of Lesneven, he asked for bread, saying, in his Breton language, "*Ave Maria, Salaun a de pre bara*,"—that is, "*Solomon would fain eat bread;*" and then he would return to his abode, where he dipped his bread in the water of a fountain hard by; and no one all his life long could make him eat or drink anything else, or sleep elsewhere. And when in winter time he was cold, he climbed up into his tree, and hung on to the branches, swinging backwards and forwards, to warm himself by the motion of his body, and singing the while with a loud voice, "*O-o-o-o-o-o Maria.*" So that, from his simpleness of life, they called him only "*the fool.*" At last, he having deceased, the neighbours, who were poor country-folk, simple and ignorant, supposing from his innocence that as he had lived without use of reason, or

[1] The legend is hung up on a board, in old French, on one of the piers.

knowledge of God or religion, as far as it appeared to them, so he had not died like a Christian, not having been assisted by the Church-folk, nor having asked for any of the Sacraments; and thinking also that those frequent words which he had in his mouth, "*Ave Maria*," meant nothing religious, but rather that they were a custom, without his knowing their meaning; and also setting down his great austerity of life to a brutish disposition by nature, which never could have tasted good or evil;—therefore they thought him not worthy to be buried in holy ground. And, moreover, his body being disowned of his friends, and despised by others, the trouble and charges of carrying it to be buried in the parish burying-ground, which was about one league distant, were an excuse to each one of them to flatter himself in this lack of charity and kindness. So it was that he was buried by the peasants, like a beast, at the foot of his tree, without priests, or the accustomed ceremonies of the Church. But the good and all-merciful God, to whom only it appertains to judge of the end, whether blessed or miserable, of all men, caused it to be seen then, for the consolation of the poor and simple in heart, that Paradise is not only for those whom the world calls wise and understanding; and, above all, that the invocation of the name of His Holy Mother, is verily a mark of predestination and salvation. For the night following, there sprung and grew up marvellously, out of the grave of this innocent, a lily all covered with flowers, though the season was adverse, and near to winter; and upon these flowers, and also upon the leaves of the tree, were read these words, imprinted, "*O Maria*," and "*Ave Maria*," just as if they had been naturally traced and graven; and they continued, until, the winter drawing on, the leaves fell off from the flowers and from the tree. At the noise and fame of this so admirable an event, there came together from all parts, an infinite number of folk, as well of the clergy as of the nobility and others, who proposed to build a church in

honour of the glorious Virgin, in this place, sanctified by so evident a miracle, and where the invocation of her holy name had appeared so effectual.

A people who build churches in honour of fools, must be expected to do many other strange things, grotesque, puzzling, revolting, to the shrinking taste and the cautious, unventuresome imagination of the civilised traveller, who suddenly throws himself into this mediæval race. Modern faith shrinks from details, declines the doubtful, cannot tolerate juxtaposition of the heterogeneous; it is not imaginative or wide. Not so the hardy, daring faith that still survives in Brittany. There the world of faith is the counterpart of the world of sight; a world which addresses itself not merely to the devotional or contemplative feelings, but to the whole man; as full of detail and variety as the visible creation; with its heights and depths, with its unaccountable phenomena, its strange conjunctions; which opens up, not by a formless, featureless expanse of light, but by visions insulated, unfinished, yet distinct, to the Everlasting Throne—which sinks down, through all loathsomeness, absurdity, terror, to the depths of the bottomless pit; and in this middle world presents a mixture astounding, yet to its own denizens most natural, of the heavenly, the human, and the infernal.

There is one prominent feature in this, which excites very strange feelings in the serious Englishman. He has probably been accustomed to think only with solemn fear of that evil being who is to

him almost the unnameable : not with hatred, not with contempt, not with anything approaching to levity. He goes to Brittany, and he finds, as in the Middle Ages, that the prevailing feeling is one of heartfelt derision, implying, but almost too strong to show, real human hatred—the feeling of redeemed man, triumphing over and laughing to scorn his outwitted enemy. The Evil one is brought in to make sport, in the Breton play, or the Breton tale : the Breton hero must always, to keep up his character, "*jouer quelque mauvais tour au diable.*" "Le diable," says M. Souvestre, "est la victime obligée, c'est l'Orgon du fabliau Bas-Breton ; dans le genre plaisant, comme dans le genre terrible, sa figure est celle qui domine." "C'est une assez curieuse étude," adds our philosophic *Breton-francisé*, "que celle de cette vieille haine, qui prend tour à tour la forme de la malédiction, ou de la raillerie."[1]

The popular stories are all of his baffled power and cunning,—not of tremendous conflicts, souls staked and lost, or hardly saved, but of his ridiculous failures, or precipitate and foolish bargains with men. There is a grotesque belief—sprung, perhaps, from the same feeling which gave birth to Eastern Dualism,—that the wild animals, and the coarse and ugly species of the same type, are the result of his abortive efforts at creation ; the ass in his copy of the horse, the fox of the dog. In his contests with man, he is defeated not by sanctity, but by superior cunning.

[1] Souvestre, p. 83.

He tries his sharpness against the long-headed, shrewd peasant, or the light-hearted, quick-witted Troadec, the great mythic hero of these encounters; and he is disgracefully taken in, laughed at, and duly tortured. Nothing so completely recalls the grotesque side of the Middle Ages, as these strange tales, so profane to our ears, which the traveller may still hear in the inn-kitchen, or in the *petite voiture*.

Another, and a different feature of mediæval times, are the pilgrimages and "*pardons*,"—assemblages, by hundreds and thousands, to seek the blessing attached to a particular spot. There is the same undoubting and ardent devotion—there are also, in many cases, the same excesses. The smaller meetings, it is said, are free from these scandals: certainly, nothing can be more striking and solemn than some of them, from first to last,—unless there happens to be present a rude Englishman, or, what is still worse, a mocking Frenchman. But at the larger ones, part of the business of the day is to get drunk, to the annual vexation of the priests and the annual entertainment of the neighbouring *bourgeois*. M. Souvestre's account of one of the most famous pilgrimages is revolting in the extreme. Mr. Trollope gives a description of another, which probably is a fairer specimen,—the pilgrimage to St. Jean du Doigt, near Morlaix.

We left Morlaix by the picturesque faubourg of Troudousten, which lines the side of the valley with its irregular collection of buildings; and then traversed the

shady woods of Tréfeunteniou, and the deep valley of the Dourdu. . . .Farther on, we crossed the little stream of the Mesqueau, and soon after arrived at the object of our pilgrimage.

All this time we had been journeying amid a crowd of all ages and sexes, who were bound to the same point, and which became denser as we approached the village. We made directly for the church, as the grand centre of interest; and, having reached the churchyard, found ourselves in the midst of a scene, which it is almost as difficult adequately to describe as it is impossible ever to forget.

The church is a large building, with a handsome tower, standing in the midst of an area, which is but little encumbered with gravestones. This was thickly crowded with a collection of men, women, and children, more motley in appearance than can readily be conceived by any one who has not seen the never-ending variety of Breton costume. The churchyard was bounded on part of one side by a long straggling building, which had been turned into a cabaret for the occasion. The door and front of this house were on the side looking away from the church; but a window opening into the churchyard had been converted into a temporary door, for the more ready passage of the pilgrims from one to the other of the two occupations, drinking and devotion, which on a pilgrimage, as for the most part elsewhere, form the principal amusements of a Breton's life.

In the parts of the inclosure farthest from the church, were erected a quantity of booths, beneath which were exposed for sale innumerable specimens of all the various trumpery which forms the machinery of Romish devotion. Pictures and figures of saints, especially of St. John the Baptist, of every possible size, form, and sort; chaplets of various materials; bottles of water from holy fountains; crucifixes, crosses, and calvaries, etc., were the principal articles. Amid these, other stalls were devoted to the

more mundane luxuries of nuts, rolls, figs, sausages, prunes, biscuits, apples, crêpe, etc. By the side of the pathway leading to the principal door of the church the dealers in wax and tallow candles had stationed themselves. The consumption of these, and the supply provided for it, were enormous.

The thing that most struck me after the first glance at the various heterogeneous parts of this strange scene, was an equable and constant motion of that part of the crowd who were nearest to the church, around the walls of the building; and, on pressing forwards, I found an unceasing stream of pilgrims walking round the church, saying prayers, and telling their beads. Many performed this part of the ceremony on their bare knees.

Just outside the moving circle thus formed, and constituting a sort of division between it and the rest of the crowd, were a row of mendicants, whose united appearance was something far more horrible than I have any hope of conveying an idea of to the reader. . . .

Each horrible object continued all the day in the position he had taken up, and in many instances in attitudes which it appeared scarcely possible to retain so long. One man lay on his back on the ground, while both his bare legs were raised high in air, and sustained in that position by crutches. Of course each studiously placed himself so as most to expose that particular affliction which qualified him to take his place among the sickening crew. All vociferated their appeals to the charity of the crowd incessantly, and most of them appeared to receive a great many alms from the pilgrims. Some gave a small coin to every one of the revolting circle. In many instances we observed change demanded by the giver, and produced readily by the miserable object of his charity. Many gave part of the provisions which they had brought with them in their wallets from their distant homes. . . .

The novelty and strangeness of the scene around the church detained us long from entering it. Fresh pilgrims

continued to arrive every instant, and joined themselves to the never-ceasing procession around the building, who came, as was evident from their costume, from various distant parts of the country. Grave, decorous peasants, in black, from the neighbourhood of Morlaix and St. Thégonec, were mixed with wild-looking, travel-stained figures from the hills. Here a group might be seen, whose white flannel jackets and violet-coloured breeches showed them to be from the neighbourhood of St. Pol de Léon ; and there a blue cloak with its short, falling cape, declared its wearer to have come from the western extremity of the northern coast. Roscovites were there, with their close, green jackets, white trousers, and red sashes ; and inhabitants of the distant shores opposite to Brest, distinguishable by their glaring costume of red coats and breeches, and white waistcoats, adorned with crimson buttons. . . .

Each freshly-arrived party, as they entered the churchyard, fell into the ranks, and muttering as they went, commenced the tour of the church ; and having performed that, some more, some fewer times, proceeded next into the interior, and struggled onwards through the crowd towards the altar. This was no easy matter to accomplish. We followed into the church a recently-arrived party of very poor-looking pilgrims from the hills, whose liberal alms-giving we had been observing with surprise and interest, and endeavoured to make our way towards the altar in their wake.

The church was large ; but it was crowded to such a degree, that it was absolutely difficult to find room to stand within the doors. By degrees, however, and by dint of long perseverance and much striving, we at length got near the principal altar. A narrow passage along the front of the rails of this had been partitioned off, into one end of which the crowd struggled, and issued from the other.

Within the rails was a priest, carrying the Finger, in

its little case, and applying it to the eyes of the people, one after another as fast as he possibly could. Running the whole length along the top of the rails of the altar was a sort of box, about four inches broad, by six deep. The top consisted of a sort of grating, formed of a succession of wooden bars, with interstices between them, about a third of an inch in breadth. Into this each devotee dropped one or more pieces of money as soon as the miraculous relic had touched his eyes.

I have been assured that the sum of money received annually at St. Jean du Doigt on this day is very considerable indeed. And I can easily conceive it to be so; for the confluence of people was immense, and of course no one there failed to come to the altar, nor could I perceive that any one left it without having deposited an offering in the box.

The crowding, pushing, struggling, and jostling, at the entrance to the passage in front of the altar, was tremendous. Here, high above the heads of the undulating crowd, mounted on a level with the top of the altar-rails, was a beadle, with a good stout cane in his hand, with which he was laying about him vigorously; whacking the most violent and impatient of the crowds over their heads and shoulders; much in the same manner that a Smithfield drover regulates the motions of an irritated and over-driven herd of bullocks.

We remained near the altar for some time. But there was nothing more to see than we had seen. The same thing continued without the slightest variation. Fresh comers continually thronged to the door of the passage, and supplied the places of those who kept streaming from the other end, as fast as the priest could touch both their eyes with the sacred relic. And this continued nearly the whole day.

I could not perceive that anybody watched to see if the people dropped their money. The priest certainly paid no attention to it, being fully engaged in performing

his own task, now stepping back a little, and now forward, and now stretching out his arm to some one behind, whom the throng prevented from getting close to the altar-rails. It appeared, indeed, that the honesty or fanaticism of the pilgrims rendered any care on this point unnecessary. For I observed many, who had had the finger applied to their eyes across others, and were consequently separated from the box on the rails, and were being carried away by the motion of the crowd, struggling hard to reach the box with their hand, to deposit therein their offering. . . . This continued without stopping till about six o'clock, at which hour the procession was to take place.

Mr. Trollope proceeds to describe a custom which has struck all who have seen it—the fires of St. John's Day.

There are few villages or hamlets in Brittany that have not their bonfire on the eve of St. John; but of course, in the village under his peculiar patronage, and in the presence of hundreds of pilgrims, assembled for his express honour, the rite is solemnised with especial pomp and circumstance, and the blaze is a glorious one. . . .

To this spot the solemn train proceeded. A hollow way led up the side of the hill, and in some degree compelled, by its narrowness, the immense crowd to keep behind the procession. We however climbed up the steep side of this ravine, and thus, high above the heads of the crowd, looked down upon the assembled multitude. The *coup d'œil* was certainly a very striking one. The processional pomp, examined in detail, was of course mean and ridiculous. But the general aspect of the prodigious multitude, assembled from so many distant homes, their deep seriousness and evident devotion, as with bare heads, and long locks streaming in the wind, they raised the burthen of their solemn chant, could not fail to affect powerfully the imagination. . . .

At length the living mass reached the top of the hill, and arranged itself in a vast circle around the huge stack of dry broom and furze, which was destined to the flames. Some fireworks were to be let off first; and when this had been done, the firing of a cannon gave the signal that the bonfire was about to be lighted. This, however, was to be accomplished in no ordinary way, but by fire from heaven, or by a contrivance intended to resemble it in effect as nearly as might be. A long rope was attached to the top of the church tower, the other end of which communicated with the fuel. Along this a *feu d'artifice*, in the form of a dove, was to be launched, which was to run along the line and ignite the dry brushwood.

Great is the importance attached to this feat of ingenuity, and long is the sight looked forward to by the admiring peasants. Down shot the fiery dove at the sound of the cannon, and briskly she flew along the rope, amid the murmured raptures of the crowd, till she had travelled about half the distance. But, there, alas! she stopped dead, nor could any expedient of shaking the rope, etc., induce her to advance another inch.

The fact was, that the rope was not stretched tightly enough to produce an uninterrupted line in an inclined plane. Its own weight caused it to form a considerable curve, and the dove decidedly refused to advance an inch up hill. Thus foiled in their scenic effect, the masters of the ceremonies were fain to light their bonfire in an ordinary and less ambitious way.

This was soon done. The dry brushwood blazed up in an instant, and the already wide circle round the fire was soon enlarged by the heat, which drove back the thick ranks by its rapidly increasing power. . .

Soon after the pile was lighted, the clergy, with the banners, the relics, and the principal part of the procession, left the bonfire, and returned down the hill to the village. This appeared to be the signal that all semblance of a religious ceremony might now be dropped. The re-

mainder of the evening was given up to unrestrained merry-making and carousing. The dance round the fire which, when formerly it was lighted at the same period of the year, in honour of the Sun, was intended to typify the motion of the stars, and has been preserved, though meaningless since the Christianisation of the festival, was duly performed. Cattle were brought, and made to leap over the burning embers to preserve them from disease, and from the malice of the fairies. Boys and girls rushed in, and snatched from the glowing mass a half-consumed morsel, to be carefully preserved till next St. John's Eve for good-luck—shouts and cries rose on all sides from the excited multitude ; and the whole scene, over which a solemn and religious spirit had so recently presided, became one of frolic and confusion.

One after another the surrounding hills were lighted up each with its crowning bonfire, and the reflections of many others still more distant were seen in the sky, imparting to the heavens in every direction the ruddy glow of a golden sunset. Then groups of girls, in their holyday trim, might be seen stealing off and mounting the various points of the hills, to try if they could see nine fires at once. For, if they can do this, they are sure of being married in the course of the year. . . .

We did not return by the road we had come, but by Lanmeur. The whole country through which we passed was illumined by a succession of fires. And on many of the hills a shadowy circle of ghostlike figures might be seen, moving around the distant flames. We found no less than three bonfires blazing in different places in the very middle of the road, over which two or three diligences would have to pass in the course of a few hours.

It is not necessary, we think, to have recourse to a Celtic rite for the explanation of the fires on St. John's Eve. But there are more questionable usages

among these wild people. Paganism has scarcely yet been quite rubbed out from among them—the religion of the wells, and woods, and heaths, and shores. The tall ghostlike stone on the moor still fills the peasant with supernatural awe, though the cross has been set upon it. It is startling to be told by M. de Frêminville, a writer who professes accuracy, and is not a free-thinker, that on the western coast, and in the Isle of Ushant, idolatry was practised as late as the seventeenth century.[1] Idolatry is now gone; but wild fearful ideas about the invisible world still linger, and belief in the mystic powers of nature, mixed up with Christian legends. It is on the western coast that these superstitions, solemn everywhere in Brittany, are most dreary and terrible; that coast which looks out on the desolate ocean—"*la proue de l'ancien monde*"—and shares its gloom and storm. Even on the stillest day there is a sullen, savage look about the scene, about the gaunt dark rocks, the long, low, sandy islands in the hazy distance, the heavy sleepy balancing of the endless waters in their bed, *immensi tremor Oceani*. "Who has ever passed along this funereal coast without exclaiming or feeling, 'Tristis usque ad mortem?'"[2] Every cape and island has its associations of terror or death; fit place for the Νεκυία of the Odyssey; the refuge of the spirits of darkness whom the Gospel had scared from Greece and the East,—the abode of the weird virgins, who ruled the

[1] Trollope, vol. ii. pp. 299, 386, 389. Cambry, p. 64.
[2] Michelet.

tempests; the birthplace of Merlin; the haunt of mermaids and sea-monsters, and, in later times, of wreckers.

The local legends are equally gloomy,—legends of sin and judgment, of the great city of Ys, and the cry of its wickedness coming up to heaven like Sodom, till its measure was full. Then King Gradlon's wicked and beautiful daughter Dahut stole the golden key, which kept out the sea, and opened the floodgates, and let in the waters. But St. Gwenolen was sent to the king to save him:—"Ah! sire, sire, let us depart quickly hence, for the wrath of God will destroy this place! Thou knowest the sin of this people, the measure is full; let us haste to depart, lest we be overtaken in the same calamity." The king mounted his horse, with his daughter behind him, and fled out of the city; but the raging waves followed him, and were about to devour him. "King Gradlon," cried then a terrible voice, "if thou wilt not perish, separate thyself from that evil one thou carriest behind thee." The king knew the voice of Gwenolen,—the voice of God; he cast off his daughter to the sea, and the sea was satisfied with its prey, and stood still. But the city was swallowed up, with all that were in it, and its ruins are still pointed out under the Bay of Douarnenez.[1] There, when the storm is rising, the fishermen hear in the whistling, moaning gale, the *crierien*, the voices of the shipwrecked, shrieking for burial; and tell

[1] Pitre-Chevalier, p. 88.

that on Allsouls' Day, *le jour des morts*, you may see the pale spirits rising on the crests of the waves, and scudding like the spray before the wind, in the *Baie des Trépassés:* it is the annual gathering of those who once lived on these shores, the drowned and the buried, and they seek each other among the waves. There also they believe that the demons which wait for the lost soul, show themselves in visible form about his door during his agony; they tell of fishers' boats deeply laden with their invisible freight of spirits, gliding off to the ocean. There, at mysterious Carnac, the tombs are opened at midnight, the church is lighted up, and Death, clad in the vestments of a priest, preaches from the pulpit to thousands of kneeling skeletons: the peasants say that they have seen the lights, and heard the voice of the preacher. There also, near Auray, is the battlefield of Pluvigner, where the souls of the unshriven slain are condemned to wander till the Great Day, each in a straight line across the plain; and woe to the traveller who crosses the path of a spirit!

"While I was at Auray," says Souvestre, "I was enabled to judge how deeply the belief is rooted in the minds of the country people. A young country girl came to the house where I was staying, crying bitterly, and unable to speak. We interrogated her in alarm, and the poor girl told us, through her sobs, that her father was dying. He had gone yesterday to the Fair of Pluvigner, and had returned alone and late by the fatal field. *He had been met by a spirit*—(while she said these words, her whole body trembled); he had been thrown down, and

it was only in the morning that he had been found and brought home ; a doctor was no good, it was a priest that he wanted ; his hours were numbered.

"We went to the dying man. He was already in the agony ; but he told us his story, in words interrupted by the horrible hiccough of the deathrattle. He told us, that 'he had felt himself struck by the spirit,' and, in spite of his efforts, he had been hurled from his horse. The physician arrived, and declared that he had been seized with apoplexy."—*Souvestre*, pp. 115, 116.

Nowhere do the ideas of death crowd in so thickly and drearily. But it is on the coast that they are most gloomy and terrible. In the interior, they are of a more Christian and fireside character. On the coast, men think of the dead as exposed to the sea and storm ; inland, they still think of them, but as lingering about their old homes and families. In Léon especially, as we have already seen, in one instance, they keep up very strongly these household feelings about the dead. On Allsoul's Day, the day on which the fishermen of the coast see the vexed spirits in the tossing waves of the *Baie des Trépassés*,

The whole population of the Léonais rises serious and in mourning. It is the family anniversary, the time of commemorations ; and nearly the whole day is spent in devotion. About midnight, after a meal taken in common, all retire ; but the dishes are left on the table ; for the Bretons think that, at that hour, those whom they have lost rise from their graveyards, and come to take their annual repast under the roof where they were born.—*Souvestre*, p. 10.

The Breton shrinks from the thought of laying his

bones out of the consecrated land of Brittany—"what would his poor soul feel, if it found itself at night among so many strange souls?"—and he shrinks equally from disturbing his fathers, by burying strangers in their honoured fellowship.[1] In the midst of rejoicing, the dead are not forgotten. On St. John's night, seats are set for them by the fires, that they may come and look on at the dancers. Even at the wedding, amid its grotesque ceremonies, they are thought of; the *bazvalan*, or village tailor, who conducts the negotiations, after inviting all the living relatives to go with him to church, excuses himself from inviting the dead, because to pronounce their names would be too painful; "but let every one uncover himself, as I do, and beg for them the blessing of the Church, and rest for their souls;"—and he aloud, and the rest in an under-tone, repeat the "*De profundis.*"

These feelings are stamped on the face of the country. Even in the course of a summer visit, when the long sunny days, and the bright warm looks of sea and earth and sky, continuing week after week, make the mind less attentive and less open to opposite impressions—again and again will they force themselves upon it. What is elsewhere put out of sight, is here as much as possible kept before the face of the living. The wayside cross, with the inscription, "*Ici trespassa N.*," meets you perpetually. The parish churches in the country, especially if of any antiquity, have a strange character of hardness and

[1] Souvestre, pp. 363, 428.

dreariness, distinct from mere rudeness, and quite their own. The well-known forms of church architecture reappear, but with altered proportions and a peculiar grotesque sternness,—granite without, instead of the chequered flint and warm, rich freestone of France and England; within, whitewash, with perhaps a broad border of black; wide, open, paved spaces; and the church ending, not in a chancel, but in a cross transept. Even when empty, there is generally one sound heard in them—the loud ticking of a clock. At the east end, are the heavy, brightly-painted images; in other parts of the church, and in the porch, set up on shelves, each in a small black box, pierced, and surmounted by the cross, the skulls of those who have worshipped there, taken out of their graves when their flesh has perished, and placed on high with their names—"*Cy est le chef de N.*," in the sight of their children when they come to pray. They are churches of the dead as well as of the living.

In keeping with this character of the country, is the "sacred city" of old Armorica—the chief see of Brittany, now decayed and brought low—St. Pol de Léon. It still shows the beauty—the grace mingled with sternness—which the Church impressed upon it. For a couple of hours before he reaches the city, the traveller looks at its group of spires, which spring upwards, on a rising ground, from the vague outline of trees and houses; they are imprinted on his eye, and occupy and prepossess his imagination while he

is approaching, and they grow in interest as he comes near. There are the two cathedral spires, and, like them, but leaving them far behind, the Creisker; a pierced spire of granite, of strange and singular beauty, boldly deviating from the most graceful western types—not springing from its base with a continuously tapering outline, but rising long with solemn evenness from the ground, and then, after pausing at a deep and heavy cornice, shooting up amid a crowd of pinnacles, with inexpressible lightness and freedom into the sky. But the city beneath these beautiful structures is deserted and desolate. There is nothing but dull unbroken streets of granite, with a few people sitting at their doors, or, it may be, squatted outside, like savages, round a fire. "The general air of the place," says Mr. Trollope, "might impress a traveller with the notion that all the inhabitants were asleep. A deep and slumbering tranquillity seems to be the presiding genius of the town. The cathedral is small, low, and gloomy. No service was going on there when we entered. Two or three silent figures were kneeling motionless in different parts of the nave, and not a sound but the echo of our own footsteps disturbed the deathlike stillness of the sombre place. But the quiet was hardly more profound than that of the city without; and the deep silence, the dingy walls, and the undisturbed dust on them, seemed attributes fitting a place of worship for this scarcely living city."[1]

[1] Trollope, vol. ii. pp. 277, 278.

Even the Creisker seems, to some minds, to harmonise with the melancholy of the city. It was the remark of an intelligent Breton, that it was "the only Gothic church that gave him the idea of *repose*, like the Grecian temples." And any one who has wandered from the cold silent streets to the great *cimetière* outside, late on a summer's evening, when the full moon was rising, and hanging low and red over the misty bay behind; and has walked in this uncertain twilight along its straight avenues, bordered by ossuaries and "stations," till he stood in front of the great "Calvary," to which all the paths converge—in a broad, open space paved with gravestones,—with dimly-seen groups, as large as life, of the Passion and the Burial, before and around him, and in the background the long, low, shapeless outline of the chapel of the cemetery—must remember well the solemn dreariness of the place—

"Reliquiæ mortis hîc inhabitant."

But Breton religion, with its mixture of wildness and thoughtfulness, its tenderness and sad resignation, has other sides. Faith, as of old, works in many ways. It is a fearful thing, yet nothing new, that it can co-exist, strong and all-pervading, with monstrous evil; it is compatible with violence, and hatred, and impurity. Faith is no restraint by itself,—is no test of the virtue of the multitude. An age of faith will be fruitful in good: but the evil that grows along with it may rival in horrible excess the most porten-

tous births of atheism. The French Pantheist sees God in himself: "*même dans ses passions et ses délires.*" The Breton savage reverses this: firmly believing in the One above him, he sees his own wild passions on the Throne of Power—he sees sympathy there with his feuds and hatreds. At no distant time, we are told, he made pilgrimages to obtain "*des bons naufrages;*"[1] and stranger things still are reported of

[1] Souvestre asserts that there is a chapel near Tréguier, dedicated to N. D. *de la Haine.* "Une chapelle dediée à N. D. *de la Haine* existe toujours près de Tréguier, et le peuple n'a pas cessé de croire à la puissance des prières qui y sont faites. Parfois encore, vers le soir, on voie des ombres honteuses, se glisser furtivement vers ce triste édifice placé au haut d'un côteau sans verdure. Ce sont de jeunes pupilles lassés de la surveillance de leurs tuteurs; des viellards jaloux de la prospérité d'un voisin; des femmes trop rudement froissées par le despotisme d'un mari, qui viennent là prier pour la mort de l'objet de leur haine. Trois *Ave*, dévotement répétés, amènent irrévocablement cette mort dans l'année." This statement, on which some remarks were founded in the pages of the Review in which this paper first appeared, was contradicted by the Bishop of St. Brieuc, in whose diocese Tréguier is situated, and by the clergyman at the head of the "Petit Séminaire" at Tréguier, l'Abbé Urvoy, in letters, which were printed in the *Christian Remembrancer*, July 1846, p. 295. M. Urvoy, after warmly denying the truth of Souvestre's statement, offers the following explanation of the possible origin of the story. "Mais quel objet a pu lui donner le thème de sa burlesque histoire? Le voici probablement. Il y a sur la rive opposée au quai de Tréguier un oratoire, sous le titre de *S. Yves de Vérité.* L'amour de la justice dont était pénétré la saint et savant magistrat, le zèle et le dévouement avec lesquels il defendait les opprimés, sont demeurés tellement gravés dans les esprits, que, dans des cas d'injuste oppression ou de procès inique, on l'a invoqué spécialement dans ce lieu pour obtenir de Dieu par son entremise

him. The fanaticism of this stern faith, when it blazes out, is of the same terrible character. Take the following scene, which Souvestre states that he witnessed in 1839. A *pardon* is going on; all are dancing under the light clear sky,

When suddenly there was a movement in the crowd; the bagpipe was silent, the dance stopped, and I heard, passing round me, a name which struck me, Jôan de Guiklan. I had heard his name the day before, and had been told that he had gone out of his mind after a retreat at St. Pol de Léon, where the sermons, the solitude, and his naturally excitable temper had worked him up into a wild fanaticism; and that he went about everywhere, preaching repentance, and throwing himself across the joys of life like a messenger of death. It was added, that he had lived for many

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que la vérité fut connue, et l'injustice condamnée. Voilà un culte et un oratoire qui sont connus ici. Mais pour la chapelle de N. D. *de la Haine*, et sa bizarre superstition, elles sont de la création de M. E. Souvestre, et réellement sorties de son imagination fantasque. Car ici on ne trouve rien du pareil, ni dans le passé, ni dans le présent." The contradiction is, of course, of the highest authority, as to the existence of such a chapel as Souvestre speaks of. But the very *culte* which M. Urvoy admits might very easily, in a rude people, pass into something much stronger than his description of it, and lurk among them in a shape, not so far removed from the detestable and shameful superstition which Souvestre alleges to exist. We must add that these letters rather injure the effect of their explanations, by insisting that "Brittany is one of the least superstitious parts of France;" and by the wholesale way in which they ascribe to Souvestre the intention of discrediting the clergy, and depreciate his knowledge of the people he describes. He may be an exaggerated writer; but there is every appearance that he writes, from continual and familiar intercourse with the peasantry.

years without house, or friends, or family. He taught the word of God in the country towns, slept at the foot of the stone crosses by the roadside, or on the thresholds of solitary chapels; he took in alms only what was necessary to satisfy his hunger, and refused, with disgust, the offer of money. Never, since his madness, had his hand been stretched out to ask for, or to clasp, another hand; never a word, save of holy counsel or prophetic threatening, had fallen from his lips. In the darkest and coldest winter nights, when the frost or snow had surprised him in some lonely track, and prevented him from sleeping on his bed of stone, he remained all night standing with his rosary in his hand, chanting hymns in Breton. The people of the neighbourhood said, that a supernatural foreknowledge had been granted him, and that at the hour when death was knocking at the door of a house, the madman always preceded it, crying Repentance, Repentance! . . We soon perceived him standing on the blackened walls of a house which had been burnt some years before. He was a tall man, pale and thin. His hair fell over his shoulders, and he rolled his haggard eyes over the crowd which surrounded him. His gestures were frequent, and in jerks. He often shook his head like a wild beast, and then his black shaggy hair, half veiling his face, gave a terrible character to his look. His piercing voice had that marked tone common to the Breton accent.

His sermon, which turned upon the dangers of dancing, and the necessity of flying from the pleasures of the world, was in itself a very commonplace repetition of what I had heard twenty times in country churches; but, by degrees, the fit came upon him, and then his language assumed an energy by which I confess to have been myself overcome. Vivid images, stirring appeals, sarcasm, pointed, coarse, and driven home to the heart, and leaving its mark like a hot iron—this was its character. He pointed out to the crowd of dancers the rising tide,

which would soon wash away the foot-tracks which they had left on the sand; he compared the sea, which roared round their mirth as if in menace, to eternity, incessantly murmuring round their life a terrible warning; then, by an abrupt and familiar transition, he addressed his words to a young man who stood before him—

"Good morrow, Pierre; good morrow to thee; dance and laugh, my son; here thou art, where, two years ago, they found the body of thy brother who was drowned."

He continued in the same strain, calling every one by his name, stirring each heart by the bitterest recollections, and detailing them with ferocious exactness. This lasted long, and yet his cutting bantering was not softened. One felt, by turns, touched and indignant at hearing these sarcasms, sharp as daggers, which searched about in each man's history, to find out some old wound to open. At last Jôan quitted these personal addresses, to speak of the pains reserved for the sinner, and, attributing to God a horrible irony, he proclaimed to those who, on earth, had loved the intoxication of the dance and the revel, an eternal dance in the midst of the flames of hell. He described this circle of the damned, whirled about for millions of ages in a perpetual round of sufferings ever renewed, to the sound of wailing, and sobbing, and gnashing of teeth. In my life I had never heard anything so agitating as this grotesque sermon, mingled with bursts of maniac laughter, with imprecations, and prayers:—the crowd breathed hard.

Then he contrasted, with this frightful description, a picture of the blessedness of the elect; but his expressions were feeble and tame. He was not carried away, except when he spoke of the necessity of self-mortification, and of offering our sufferings to God. Then he gave the history of his life with so majestic a simplicity, that one might have fancied that one was hearing a page of Scripture. He told how he had lost his fortune, his children, his wife; and, at the recital of each loss, he

exclaimed,—"It is well, my God: blessed be Thy holy name!" The women burst into tears. He added advice and exhortations to repentance; and finally, warming more and more, he told how his losses had appeared to him too little to expiate his sins. Jesus Christ had appeared to him in a dream, and had said to him, "Jôan, give Me thy left hand—to Me, who gave My life for thy salvation."—"Lord, it is Thine," he had answered. "And I have fulfilled my promise," he cried, raising above his head his left arm, which till now we had not noticed.

There was a stump, wrapped round with bloody rags. A murmur of amazement and horror burst out all round.

"Who is afraid?—who is afraid?" rejoined the maniac, whose vehemence seemed only to increase. "I have restored to God that which He gave me. Woe be to you if the deed done at the command of Christ has made your hearts sick! Behold! behold! It is Christ who has willed it. See what I have done for the love of Christ."

And the miserable man tore off, in a frantic transport, the bandages of his wound, and, shaking his bare stump over the crowd, made the blood spurt in a half circle on all their heads.

A long cry of horror rose; part of the spectators fled terrified; some men threw themselves on the wall where he stood, and bore him to a neighbouring cottage, almost insensible.—*Souvestre*, pp. 25-28.

Yet this Breton peasant—this outlandish mediæval being—with his stoical, unhoping apathy, his low views of life and vivid thoughts of death; with his wild, dangerous faith, and dogged attachment to the past; so lofty and awful, and narrow-minded, and quaint,—is, after all, still a man; the chances are, a thoughtful, well-judging, honest man, without pretence or sham,—understanding and trusting himself with

fairness; a man for unromantic self-sacrifices. Home and family feelings are as strong in Brittany as they are in England. Not that he is the least romantic in his domestic affections; home and family, however indispensable, are simply what tame prose makes them, scenes of work, trials of temper. Never does the Breton cheat himself by gay illusions, not even on his wedding-day. Though he is poetical then, and sings, his poetry comes in, not to dwell on visions of bliss, but on the troubles of the cottage nursery; to chant not an Epithalamium, but a Threnode. A strange "Song of the Bride," is that which Mr. Trollope has translated from Souvestre; and the Bridegroom's is like it:—

In other days—in the days of my youth—how warm a heart I had! Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

I had a heart so ardent! Neither for gold, nor for silver, would I have given my poor heart! Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

Alas! I have given it for nothing! Alas! I have placed it where joys and pleasures are no more. Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

Pains and toil await me. Three cradles in the corner of the fire! A boy and a girl in each of them! Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

Three others in the middle of the house! Boys and girls are there together! Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

Go, maidens! haste to fairs and to pardons! but for me I must do so no longer! Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

For me, see you not, that I must remain here!

Henceforward I am but a servant, girls; for I am married. Adieu, my companions, adieu for ever!

There is little gaiety, or gossip, or comfort in a Breton cottage, but nothing could make up to its tenant for the loss of its dull monotony. Just as it is, it exactly suits him; his surly affectionateness is satisfied with its dingy walls and silent company. We have drawn the wild side of his character; we will now extract a story from Souvestre, which shows him in his family—a curious picture of simplicity and reserve, of feeling and composure.

The writer goes to explore a Breton farm, one of the numberless little "homes" which parcel out the country, and which, with their surrounding fields, lie out of view of the great thoroughfares, hidden by their sheltering elms, or betrayed only by their thin column of smoke.

The home of Jean Mauguerou, like all others in Brittany, consisted exclusively of a ground-floor room. The floor was of earth beaten hard, and the ceiling was formed of hazel bushes, with their dry leaves still on them, made into bundles, and supported on cross poles. On two sides of the house were four "*lits clos*" (beds like berths on shipboard), the woodwork blackened by time, and with the monogram H surmounted by the cross—the usual decoration of Christian altars—carved in open work on their sliding panels. Below these beds were seen chests of oak, with their delicate mouldings and slender shafts, spoils, no doubt, of some neighbouring manor-house in the bad days, and carried off from the bower of some lady of the château to the peasant's cottage. A high-backed arm chair, coarsely carved, was pushed into a corner of the

huge chimney; and on the table opposite the casement, was the loaf of rye-bread wrapped up in a fringed napkin, under a white wicker cover. . . . As to the circumstances of the inhabitants, the large dung-heap which I had observed near the pond, and the sides of bacon hung over the hearth, showed plainly that Mauguerou might be reckoned among the rich farmers of the country.

Just at this moment he appeared. He was a man of about five and thirty, stern and plain, but stoutly built. While he was talking with my friend, his wife was putting out milk, butter, and brown bread. She asked us to sit down, which we did, while Mauguerou lit his pipe at the fire.

As I took up the boxwood spoon which had been set for me, I noticed that it was less rude in its make than the others, and that the name "Etienne" was carved along the handle, between two vine-leaves, rather gracefully cut.

"Who is called Etienne in this house?" I asked. The farmer's wife blushed, but answered without hesitation, "It is a young man who is now a soldier."

"Don't you expect him soon?" asked my friend.

"He wrote that he should be here for August."

"That will be two good arms more to help you."

"And a good heart," said the woman, almost to herself.

The husband, enveloped in his cloud of smoke, listened unmoved.

"Who is this Etienne?" I said to my friend, in French.

"He is Yvonne's lover," said he, pointing to the woman.

"And is he coming to stay here?"

"Yes, in a few days."

"And is her husband satisfied?"

"Her husband knows all."

I stared.

"What sort of man is he, then?" I asked.

"He is a worthy man, who has confidence, and with good reason; Etienne has been tried, he has nothing to fear from him."

Etienne and Yvonne had known each other, and been in love with each other from children. In course of time, Etienne became farm-servant to Yvonne's father; and the two lovers plighted their troth, and made up their minds that they were to be man and wife. But Yvonne's father had been ill for a long time; the farm had been neglected, and had got out of order. Things became worse and worse; the bailiffs began to threaten. Etienne was a mere boy, and knew nothing of farming; he could not help. At this pinch, Mauguerou, another of the farm-servants, who had hitherto been in the background, came forward and took the command. Under his management things improved, and at length righted. Before dawn, and after nightfall, he was at work. His cheek sank, and his hair turned, his back became bowed, his limbs stiffened; still he toiled on, silently and unostentatiously, with stern calmness, and the family was saved.

But Yvonne's father was dying. He called his children about his bed, and there, with the prayers for the dying already sounding in his ears, and with the funeral tapers already lighted at his bed's head as at the head of a coffin, he spoke those sacred and solemn words, which the departing utter when their soul is in view of heaven. He bade Yvonne come near, and laying his icy hand on her brow, he reminded her that she was now the mother of her young brothers and sisters. Then calling Mauguerou

to her side—"Here is the man who has raised our house," he said to her, "and has saved you from wandering about the roads with the beggar's wallet on your shoulder. You want him, Yvonne, for a stay to these children; he must be your husband and master."

He saw that the young girl shuddered.

"I know," he added, "that thy heart is elsewhere; but he whom thou lovest cannot carry on the farm. Submit to what God wills; Christians receive baptism to suffer; thy duty is better than thy joy.

"And you, Mauguerou, be gentle to your wife, and allow her to weep sometimes."

Mauguerou, in silence, laid his hand on his heart, and bowed himself.

"It is well," said the dying man. "Now, Yvonne, will you do what I have asked of you? Will you be this man's wife after I am dead?"

The young girl did not answer; she had fallen on her knees by the bed, sobbing, and in agony she cried, "My father, my father!" But her tears prevented her from saying more, and she shrank instinctively from the promise.

"Promise to obey your father, who is dying," said a voice behind her, full of lofty despair. Yvonne turned round; her eyes met Etienne's; it was a farewell to happiness for both. Yvonne gave the promise, and her father died.

A month afterwards she had married Mauguerou. The day after the marriage, Etienne, who had been away for a week, came into the farm house. He went up to Mauguerou, who was sitting by the fire, took off his hat, and said, with a faint voice,

"Master, I am going away: yesterday I became the king's soldier."

Mauguerou looked at him with surprise.

"Why are you leaving us?" he asked.

"My heart is sick; I must go elsewhere."

"You could have found a cure here among us."

The young man shook his head, without answering.

"Listen to me, Etienne," said Mauguerou, with simplicity; "remain here; everybody wishes you well; you have your stool by the fire and your porringer in the dish-rack; your going will make a void among us."

"It is better so, master — let me go. There are bad spirits round me in this house. I will come back when I have forgotten what is gone, when — when you have children."[1]

Mauguerou made a sign of distressed consent; Etienne twisted his hat for a moment in embarrassment, and there was a pause.

"Good-bye, Mauguerou," he said, at last, with a choked voice.

The peasant seized his hand with both his own, and pressed it for some minutes without saying anything; then he called out—

"Yvonne, Etienne is going; come and speak to him!" And he left the house.

After a long and bitter farewell, the two lovers separated, and Etienne joined his regiment.—*Souvestre*, pp. 442-450.

Jean Mauguerou is a true Breton peasant; a reserved, silent, not unobservant, not unintelligent man; though "progress" has no charms for him: if you are a stranger and an Englishman—*a Saxon*—he will bear you no particular love, but he will probably treat you with a kind of just courtesy, and be a man of his

[1] "L'adultère est extrêment rare chez les paysans de la basse Bretagne; le titre de mère est une sauvegarde pour une femme, et éloigne d'elle toute idée de séduction. C'est avant le mariage seulement, que les lois de la chasteté sont violées."—*Souvester*, p. 449.

word; his curiosity, or his local interest, may even make him talkative, and, if you can make out his French, he may startle you with some *naïve* disclosure of Chouan feeling, or popular superstition. Nor does he want for shrewdness, though he lives so much out of the world; in some districts especially, for every parish almost has its own character, he is a match for most opponents. The people of Roscoff, the green-grocers of the province, who travel riding and singing in their light carts almost to the gates of Paris, are dangerous traders: a purchaser must take care how he deals with them. Souvestre describes almost feelingly their skill in handling a customer; their bullying, or their caressing, according to circumstances; "how, if he finds you firm, he will call you *son cher pauvre Chrétien*, and lavish on you the most endearing expressions of the Breton vocabulary, till he has insinuated his merchandise into your basket, and concluded his bargain, before you have offered a price." But this is an exception; the grand resource of the Breton in making a bargain is resolute ignorance of any language but his own.

The natural enemies of the Breton farmers are the cunning, subtile, Norman horse-dealers, who have long "worked" the province to great advantage. The Bretons know this, and are in a state of perpetual distrust of the horse-dealers, which increases their natural taciturnity. They often sham drunkenness, to make the horse-dealers think that it will be easy to surprise them; but generally, they entrench themselves in an apparent stupidity, of which nothing can express the grotesque truth. On that

day not a single peasant knows French ; and the inexperienced purchaser lets fall expressions which guide the seller in his bargaining : but the older dealers are up to the farce, and retort by affecting an entire ignorance of the Celtic language. Then it is a scene worth looking at, this struggle between Breton and Norman trickery ; the peasant, listening immovably, with a stupid attention, to the horse-dealer's remarks, who, with an air of indifference, looks at the horse as if he cared not a straw about it, remarks fifty faults, loud enough for the seller to hear, and ends by proposing half the real value,—the result of this "*fourberie laborieuse*" naturally being that, if the bargainers are equally matched, the fair price is hit upon. —*Souvestre*, p. 395.

But bargain-making of any kind is not the line of the Breton ; his defensive position shows that he is not at home in it. He adheres to the old notion of riches ; he makes money, if he can, but by close parsimony, not by speculation ; he hoards, but does not invest. The mere process of buying and selling has no attractions for him ; his enjoyments are of a different kind. The nation is still too poetical for the joys of business.

As in many other things, so in this, Brittany is a specimen of the old world : it is still in its poetical phase ; it has scarcely yet reached to prose ; all is rhythm, all is traditional, everything is chanted or sung. "When the cholera was in the province," says Souvestre, "it was in vain that the *préfet* and the doctors sent forth proclamations, directions, warnings ; no peasant would look at them, for they were mere official prose. The only way was to make a

*chanson sur le choléra*, and set it to a national air; and then the beggars were soon chanting in all parts of the country, 'what Christians were to do to escape the cholera.'" Poetry is there in its earliest state, before it has become a literature, or a luxury, or the voice of individual feeling or genius; the natural, free, careless outpouring of feeling in rude and warm-hearted masses. Poetry is with them not an inspiration, but a habit of mind, a sense or faculty; a natural part of a character impressible and thoughtful, intent on few objects, and those absorbing ones. Without any great events, or great names, their poetry floats and circulates from village to village, from generation to generation, homely, and real, and touching; perpetually oozing out, fresh and exuberant, from the undistinguished crowd—hymns, and ballads, and elegies, and Theocritean idyls, and love laments, and satires, and tragedies; quaint combinations, in every conceivable degree, of clumsiness and delicacy, the genuine work of the people; of village tailors and schoolmasters, strolling beggars and young seminarists. The individual author may put his name, but it is forgotten; his work is known only by its subject; it is passed from mouth to mouth, altered and interpolated at will, to make it a more perfect expression of the feeling which it embodies. After a time it may be printed; but its home is in the voices and memories of the peasants. The blind beggar goes from *pardon* to *pardon*, like the old ῥαψῳδός, and stands by the church reciting his poem

on the birth of Jesus Christ, which it takes him a whole day to get through. And as it is living poetry, it has its music, and is sung; and poems and airs alike are endless.

The character of these "songs of the people"—the genuine expression of feelings, which elsewhere the sympathy of art prides itself on copying—is well given in the following, the "famous complaint of the labourer." Even diluted through French prose into English, it calls up some notion of what the original must be, when it is heard in its own rude force, and monotonous rhythm, in the smoky cottages, or on the half-cultivated "landes" of Brittany.

THE COMPLAINT OF THE LABOURER

My daughter, when the silver ring is put on thy finger, beware who gives it thee:

My daughter, when thou makest room for two in thy cottage-bed, see that thou hast a soft pillow.

My daughter, when thou choosest a husband, take not a soldier, for his life is the king's: take not a sailor, for his life is the sea's; but, before all, take not a labourer, for his life belongs to toil and misfortune.

The labourer rises before the little birds are awake in the woods, and he toils until evening. He fights with the earth without peace or respite, till his limbs are stiff, and he leaves drops of sweat on every blade of grass.

Rain or snow, hail or sunshine, the little birds are happy, for the good God gives a leaf to each of them for shelter; but the labourer, he has no hiding-place: his bare head is his roof-tree; his flesh is his home.

Every year he must pay his rent to the landlord; and if he is behind, the master sends his bailiff. Rent!—the labourer shows his fields parched up, and his mangers

empty. Rent! Rent!—the labourer shows his children's coffins at the door, covered with the white cloth. Rent! Rent! Rent!—the labourer bows his head, and they lead him to prison.

Very miserable, too, is it to be the labourer's wife: all night long the children cry, and she rocks them; all day, at her husband's side, she is turning the ground: she has no time to comfort herself—no time to pray, to soothe her heart. Her body is like the wheel of the parish mill; ever must it be going, to grind for her little ones.

And when her sons are grown great, and their arms are grown strong to relieve their parents, then the king says to the labourer and his wife: "You are old, and too weak to train up your children; see how strong they are, I will take them from you for my war."

And the labourer and his wife begin afresh to sweat and to suffer, for they are once more alone. The labourer and his wife are like the swallows which build their nest under the windows in the town; every day they are swept away, every day they must begin again.

O labourers! ye lead a sore life in the world. Ye are poor, and ye make others rich; despised, and ye pay honour; persecuted, and ye submit yourselves; ye are cold, and ye are hungry. O labourers! ye endure much in this life; labourers, ye are blessed.

God hath said, that the great gates of His Paradise shall be open for those who have wept upon earth. When ye shall come to heaven, the saints will know you for their brethren by your wounds.

The saints will say: "Brothers, it is not good to live; brothers, life is sorrowful, and it is a happy thing to be dead;" and they will receive you into glory, and into joy.—*Souvestre*, p. 450.

But the Paris newspaper is on its way, and doubtless this natural poetry is gradually failing, hemmed

in by French prose. The marriage negotiations, which used to be a trial of extempore poetical talent between the young lady's friends and the village tailor who was the mediator, are now generally carried on in set couplets,—even the *bazvalan*, the humpbacked, squinting tailor, with his one stocking white and the other blue, is become a formula. And other things in time will follow him. But they are not gone yet. The story, and song, and tragedy are still the great delight of the Breton peasantry, which they enjoy with the utmost gravity and seriousness, as they enjoy their not less solemn dances, or wrestling matches, and, at fitting times, the pleasure of getting drunk.

Nothing brings out the mingled clumsiness and feeling of the Breton character, its originality of idea and want of resources, so much as their tragedies. The Breton tragedy is a remarkable thing in its way; a serious and important affair, both in the eyes of actors and spectators, by no means to be confounded with what, at first sight, it most resembles, the trumpery of an English fair, or the exhibition of strolling players; nay, not even with the refined and magnificent opera. There is a rude, quaint dignity and self-respect about it: it is not a money-making show, presented by paid and professional actors, but an entertainment given to equals by their equals, who find an ample recompense in the pleasure of their own acting and the attention of their audience. The tragedy itself has lofty pretensions, and professes a

higher mission than merely to amuse. Supremely despising all effect, all artificial arrangement, or strokes of passion, it marshals, with solemn, clumsy exactness, the instructive moralities of some notable life before the audience, "in chapters, rather than scenes." It begins with unaffected gravity, in the most Holy Name; then comes the Prologue, giving good advice, and the key of the drama, to the "Christian and honourable" assembly which has collected to hear it, while at every four verses the actor who is reciting makes the circuit of the theatre, followed by all the company, during which "march," say the stage directions, "the rebecks and bagpipes must sound:" and then, in perfect keeping with this grotesque beginning, follows the interminable length of the play itself, divided into a number of "*journées*," and often actually extending over more than one day. But however long it may be, it never tires out the grave patience of a Breton audience.

The external appliances and machinery of the theatre show the same high-minded contempt for scenic illusion. Tragedy in Brittany still preserves, in its theatre, its antique simplicity. While it has elsewhere retired under cover, strutting by gaslight before the rich in a gorgeous playhouse, or ranting in a barn before the poor by dim rush-light illumination, it here comes forward under the open sky, and its stage is still mounted upon waggons. Mr. Trollope thus describes what he saw of the tragedy of St. Helena.

The ground, though all covered with turf, was considerably broken and uneven, so as to afford peculiar facilities to a large concourse of people, all anxious to have a perfect view of the same object. On the highest point of the ground, with its back against the gable end of a house adjoining the common, was the stage. Nine large carts had been arranged in close order, in three rows of three each, and on these a rude scaffolding of planks was supported. At the back of this were hung, on a rope sustained by poles on either side, several sheets, so as to partition off a portion at the back of the stage, to serve as a green-room for the performers to retire to. This white background was ornamented with a few boughs of laurel and bunches of wild flowers, and somewhat less appropriately, perhaps, with two or three coloured prints, from the cottages of the neighbours, of Bonaparte and the Virgin.

Of the performers—though it was now past two o'clock, despite the promised punctuality of our friend the tailor—there was yet no appearance. The crowd, however, seemed to be waiting with great patience, and everybody appeared to be in high good-humour. All were busily engaged in securing the most advantageous places. One long row, chiefly composed of women, occupied the top of the churchyard wall—a most desirable position, inasmuch as, though seated at their ease, they were sufficiently raised to see over the heads of those who stood at the bottom of the wall. Some preferred seats on a bank which commanded a perfect view of the stage, but which must have been rather too far to hear well, to a nearer place, where it would have been necessary to stand. The greater part of the men stood in the immediate front of the scaffolding, gazing on the unoccupied stage, and waiting with imperturbable patience the appearance of the performers.

At length, the shrill tones of the national instrument—the bagpipe—were heard approaching from a lane, which

opened upon the common, and all eyes were immediately turned in that direction. We were, probably, the only persons on the ground who were not aware that this betokened the arrival of the players. But we were not long left in our ignorance. For presently the bagpiper himself, followed by men bearing the banners belonging to the church, made their appearance upon the common. Behind these, in grave and solemn procession, and full theatrical costume, came the tragedians. The crowd immediately formed a lane for them to pass, and thus, with great dignity and decorum, they reached the scaffolding, and, one after another, mounted by a ladder to the stage. When they were all up, they marched thrice round the boards in the same order as before, with the bagpipe still playing at their head; then gravely bowed to the audience, who lifted their hats in return, and retired behind the sheets to their green-room.

The appearance of the corps dramatique was more preposterously absurd and strange than can well be conceived by those who have not seen them with the accompanying circumstances of air, manner, and expression, and all the surrounding objects, which gave such novelty and striking character to the scene.

There was the pope with his triple crown, very ingeniously constructed of coloured paper, a black petticoat for a cassock, a shirt for a surplice, and a splendid cope, made of paper-hangings, and with the twofold cross in his hand. There were two kings with paper crowns, adorned with little waxen figures of saints, and arrayed in printed cotton robes, carrying in one hand a sword and in the other a cross. Three or four wore the uniform of the national guard, and the remainder made any additions they could to their usual costume which they thought would most contribute to the general effect. The female characters were all sustained by men, dressed as much like the usual costume of ladies as their knowledge and resources would permit. A very fine young man, six feet high by two

and a half at least broad, was selected to personate St. Helen, who was dressed entirely in white, with a large tablecloth for a veil.

There was one exception only to the general air of deep gravity and perfect seriousness which prevailed throughout. This was a buffoon, who was dressed in shreds, with a cap and bells, and a long pig-tail, with a huge horn in his hand, which he blew from time to time. His part was to fill up the time between the acts with buffoonery and jests. He was regarded by the crowd as he walked in the procession, making faces and affecting to ridicule the tragedians, with a passing smile ; but, for the most part, they were as grave as the performers.

The performance commenced by a single actor coming from behind the curtain of sheets, and making a very long speech. It was in rhyme, and was delivered in a very distinct manner, with much, but very unvaried action, and an extremely loud voice, that strongly marked the rhythm and cadences of the verse. He began at one corner of the front of the stage, and spoke a certain number of lines, then moved to the middle and repeated a similar quantity, did the same at the other corner, and then returned to his original position, and so on. In this manner he must have delivered, I should think, nearly two hundred verses.

He then retired, and out came the buffoon. His fun consisted, of course, chiefly in absurd attitudes ; in blowing his horn, in ribaldry, and sundry standing jests, which succeeded in producing shouts of laughter. The most successful joke of all, which was repeated every time he came upon the stage, consisted in his assuming an air of the greatest terror, and effecting his escape in the most precipitate manner, when the graver actors returned upon the scene.

The same remarks will apply to the delivery of all the other actors as to that of the first. They generally continued walking up and down the stage while speaking,

and marched round it in procession at the conclusion of every scene.

And yet this scene, with all its ineffable grotesqueness,—spiritless, childish, wearisome,—of all coarse and helpless attempts after the sublime, the most ludicrous,—is not vulgar; you cannot despise it, while you laugh at it. In spite of the matchless clumsiness of the whole proceeding, there is a seriousness about it, a composure, a genuine appreciation of the high and great; and its glaring freedom from all efforts after effect, the simple, undisguised monotony of the whole scene, raises it out of the class of ordinary stage shows. It aims in earnest at reviving the past,—the heroic, or the saintly, the strange changes of character, the visible providences, that were then. The popular interest is still set high, and that, of its own accord; for these tragedies come from the people,—their authors are scarcely known. The exhibition is not that of a low-minded or low-bred people; even about the manner of giving it there is a dignity and mutual self-respect, an ἐλευθεριότης, a sort of gentlemanliness; actors and spectators meet as equals; the spectators come, not to pay hirelings to amuse them, but to assist at an entertainment given by their fellows and friends. All goes on as between equals,—equals of high breeding,—with solemn etiquette, and all the ceremoniousness of old-fashioned aristocratic courtesy.

Indeed this self-respect is one of the most striking characteristics of the Breton peasant. The eldest

born of the races of France, he has a strong feeling of the honours of years and ancient blood: he is the old *noblesse* among the French peasantry. There was no prouder noble in the French peerage than the Breton Rohan—"*Roi je ne suis, prince ne daigne, Rohan je suis,*"—but before the proudest of the Rohans his own tenants would have drawn themselves up, and said in their solemn manner, "*Me zo deuzar Armoriq* —I too am a Breton."[1] Yet with them the pride of the Celt is deeply hidden; it does not show itself in any thing petty,—in any small peevishness, or uneasy watchfulness after small slights. It is dignified, almost unconscious,—it pervades the man; and, when it appears, it explodes. Their blood is as good as the gentleman's, and so is their faith; and while the gentleman is just, the peasant is content with his lower place in the world: but the gentleman must not interfere with what God has appointed, or with what the peasant thinks his due. No one can, on occasion, hate the gentleman with deeper, bloodier hatred, than the old-fashioned royalist peasant. He is at once aristocratic and republican; too proud not to recognise gentle blood and superiority in others; too proud, also, to do so slavishly. He will not refuse to work for the *messieurs*, but it is a traditional point of honour with him that the "labour of the gentleman" should not display an excess of zeal.[2] Nor will he defile himself with the low toil and base gains of the artisan. His thoughts and his works

[1] Michelet. [2] Souvestre, p. 459.

are about that where man's art stops short, and the mysterious unseen Hand only works, without labour or stint; with the old, sacred, benignant earth, which rewards but does not traffic; with his own peculiar plot of ground, and the masterless sea; the pasture and the cornfield, and the seaweed on the beach. Careless about the works of his own hands, and rugged in his skill, he rejoices in the gifts which come perfect and immediate from God, and by which his life is nourished. He ploughs, he reaps, he threshes the grain, in the spirit and gladness of patriarchal faith; as it is his labour, so is it his chief joy in life.

The Breton threshing-floor is well described by Souvestre. The sound of the flail is one of the most familiar summer sounds in Brittany. Every one who has travelled there will remember it—borne from a distance on the wind, as his road passed the opening of some valley—and the lines of dancing, bounding figures among the corn.

When the sheaves were carefully spread out on the floor, the old peasant who had led the reapers, took his place, and made the sign of the cross, by striking with his flail several times; this was, as it were, the taking possession of the floor. The other labourers then ranged themselves in a circle. The flails first rose slowly, and without order, whirling round, and poising themselves like waltzers ready to start and getting into the step,—then, on a sudden, at a shout of the leader, they fell all together, and rose again and descended in cadence. The stroke, at first light and moderate, soon took a more lively movement: it fell heavier, it grew animated, then hurried

and furious. The reapers, carried away by a sort of nervous intoxication, danced up and down among the resounding sheaves, on which their blows fell fast and thick as a summer hail-storm. The dust of the chaff raised by the flail rose round them in light eddying clouds, and a line of sweat marked each muscle beneath their tight-fitting dress. At intervals they seemed to yield to this toil, and the regular beat became weaker by degrees, as if it was lost in the distance; but then, the leader gave a peculiar cry, a mixture of encouragement, rebuke, and command, and in a moment thirty shouts responded and the sound of the threshing became louder and louder, like an approaching peal of thunder,—it rallied, it spread, more rapid, more wild, more furious. —*Souvestre*, p. 463.

Out of this wild country, and its stern, poetical-minded people, French enterprise is trying to make something more adapted to the standard of Paris and *Napoléonesque* ideas. French enterprise is not the most promising engine to produce great changes in commerce and industry. It talks very cleverly, but it talks too much; it wants the spirit of plodding, it wants capital. But it is at work. A manufactory of steam engines was set up at Landerneau,[1] great trouble was taken, great patience shown by the engineer; the Breton peasants were drilled out of their clumsiness and poetry, and learnt to believe that the steam-engine was a machine, and that they could make one. But capital failed. We have before alluded to the attempts to introduce a more modern style of farming,—an uphill work, in which the

[1] Souvestre, p. 485.

disinterestedness of the improvers is suspected, and every failure is looked upon by the peasantry as a judgment against them. Interference with the earth, their ancient ally and friend, is peculiarly repugnant to Breton feeling, and deemed almost profane.

The following passage will show in what spirit the improvements of the French farmer are met. It is a dialogue between an old Breton peasant, the patriarch of the neighbourhood, and an "improving" French gentleman-farmer, who had reclaimed a large tract from the sea by shutting it out with a dyke. The dyke did not please his old-fashioned neighbour. A report got about of a compact with evil spirits, and it was called *le Mole du Diable*. The farmer, for his own protection, and to prevent its being injured by them, had all the new works "baptized" by the parish priest—the dyke, and the drained land, and his own new house. To the surprise of the peasants, the improvements stood the holy water without moving; but the people were not a bit the more reconciled to them.

"You were one of those" (he says to the old peasant) "who maintained that I should never succeed in enclosing the bay."

"It is true, sir."

"*Eh bien, père*, you see that you are out. The sea herself has furnished me with rocks and sand to wage war with her; and she has produced a child stronger than herself; and now the dyke laughs at her."

"Men say that it is a sin for children to make a mock at their parents," answered Carfor.

"However, you see I have done what I said."

The old man shrugged his shoulders, as if to express his doubts; he was silent for a moment; then stretching out his hand to the shoulder of the farmer, with a gesture at once respectful and familiar,

"You are strong, sir," he said; "but *le bon Dieu* is stronger than you; *le bon Dieu* had said to the sea to go as far as there;" and he pointed to the hillocks. "Some day He will find out that the sea is no longer obeying Him, and then your dyke will have to give way to the will of God."

"And how do you know, father, whether *le bon Dieu* has not Himself given me this bay?"

The peasant shook his head.

"*Monsieur, le bon Dieu ne vend pas son bien,*" said he gravely; "this is land stolen from the sea, and stolen goods bring no luck."

The farmer is a little nettled; and talks of the money he has put into circulation, and the various benefits to the neighbourhood which would result from his improvements; "*mais ces hommes ne comprennent rien.*"

"We understand," answered Carfor, "that when the rocks begin to move, the grains of sand are crushed. Rich men like you are always awkward neighbours for the small folk. The country was made for the country-folk, and towns for the gentlefolk; and if these come into the country, there will soon be no place for us. Before, when this bay belonged to the sea, the sea lent it to us for eight hours in the day; we could bring our carts over it, to go to the beach to pile up our seaweed. Down in the corner there, was some coarse grass, on which our sheep browsed; now you have made a ditch all round it, and said to the sea, and to us, who were its kinsmen and friends, You shall not come here any

more ; this belongs to me. And you wonder that we are not satisfied. We poor people do not like these changes, because there is never a change without taking from us a bit of our little place under the sun. If we used to like better to see the water there than the corn, it is because the sea was always a better neighbour than the *bourgeois*."—*Souvestre*, p. 435.

The old quarrel, so hard to adjust, but so certain in its issue, between the improver and the poor man of his day: to whom it is small comfort to be told, what is perfectly true, that returns will come *to some one*, and to him, *if he can but wait*. The story goes on to relate that the sea *did* prove stronger than Monsieur, and in the course of an equinoctial night washed away his dyke, and destroyed everything. When he comes down to view his losses, there is the old Breton standing on the ruined dyke, looking out on the sea, "*comme pour la complimenter de sa victoire*." The cause of improvement had not much to hope for in the neighbourhood after this.

But this might happen anywhere; habit, and distrust of improvements, and suspicion of the disinterestedness of improvers, are not confined to Brittany. There is something deeper at work beneath. Brittany is really not France, any more than the outlandish names on its map, its Plouha, and Poullaouen, and Locmariaker, and Guipava, and Lannilis, are French. It is little more to France than a nursery for some thousands of good soldiers and sailors, and a causeway for the road to Brest. Opposite in character to the people, and uncongenial in feeling, the Frenchman

is not at home in Brittany; he feels as a stranger, and is felt as such. They hate England there, it is true. Englishmen, besides being strangers and enemies, are *Saxon heretics;* Souvestre talks of the little village girls dancing with triumphant glee over the unconsecrated graves of a shipwrecked "Saxon" crew: but they have not forgotten that they once had wars with France. When the Duc de Nemours visited them, two years ago, the names of Breton victories over the French were not forgotten on the triumphal arches under which he passed. Brittany hangs on to France, because it cannot well do otherwise; but like a mass of extraneous matter, which will not assimilate, dead and heavy and unsympathising. As a part of France, she is not doing her work. A national character that ought to tell on the whole country, resolute, steady, serious, and though slow, apprehensive,—full of quiet, deep fortitude,—seems thrown away. The field of European civilisation is not, of course, the only or the highest field for these qualities; but if the advance of human society is to be considered as a providential dispensation, it is one field; and they are missed, they have not found their place, when they are not there. Brittany is like a nation which has failed in its object, and been beaten. While her neighbours are in the heyday of success, hopeful and busy, she keeps apart, contented with her own isolation, stagnant, almost in decay; and looks on with melancholy listlessness amid the stirring of the world. Her time may be yet to come. But now,

with so much that is striking in individual character, amid genuine and deeply-felt influences of the Church, she languishes as a country, aimless, without any part to play; a study for the summer tourist,—a curious contrast to that he has left behind. Yet she may remind him also, if he be wise, of times when the present, if it had as much of man's heart, had less of his feelings and his reason; a witness, like those times, of that perplexing truth, the seeming vanity to each individual man of the wonderful and magnificent order of things in which he lives—of the very short and passing interest he appears to have personally, in that which, for society, and as a system, has such high-wrought perfection and value.

# CASSIODORUS[1]

[JULY 1880]

THE great revolutions of the fifth and sixth centuries which broke up the Roman Empire were very various in their violence and forms of change. Our knowledge of the Northern races or nations who conquered and settled, and who to the Roman world were all alike barbarians, is at best imperfect and vague; but we know enough to perceive that the differences between them were as great then as those which mark the several nations which now occupy their old seats in the north of Europe. The German Franks, who broke into Gaul, or the German Vandals, who conquered Africa, were fiercer, coarser, more uncompromising races than the Goths, who won for a moment the great prize of Italy itself, and seemed likely at one time to make of it a new and great

[1] 1. *Patrologia Latina.* Edente MIGNE, tom. LXIX.—LXX. *Cassiodori Opera.* (Paris: 1865.)
2. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology.* Art. *Cassiodorus.* By Professor RAMSAY. (London: 1865.)
3. *Dictionary of Christian Biography.* Art. *Cassiodorus.* By Rev. E. M. YOUNG. (London: 1877.)

kingdom. In the neighbourhood of Byzantium, the new Rome, in frequent intercourse with it, and often in its service, the Goths had come to know something of its strength and weakness, and had learned something of its statecraft and its religion. Theodoric's conquest of Italy was something very different from the contemporaneous Frank conquest of Gaul. Clovis and his North Germans, after they had spoiled and ruined, only thought of living as they had been accustomed to live, but in greater and freer abundance of all that makes barbarian enjoyment; and after they had conquered and partitioned the Catholic Provincials, they were only too glad to find in the propagation of the Catholic faith a pretext for indulging their insatiate love of fighting at the expense of the Arian Goths of Southern Gaul. But Theodoric aimed at founding a state, in which all that the great Romans had invented and used to strengthen and order it should be preserved and made available for the benefit and the improvement of the new masters of Italy. It was necessarily a military state, which means under all disguises a ruling and a subject population; but it was his definite purpose and object that the signs of this should be visible as little as possible on the surface of things, and should in the course of time actually disappear in the gradual fusion and union of the two races, Gothic and Italian; and this purpose might perhaps, if he had left a line of successors like himself, have been more than a dream.

As it was, events were hopelessly against him,

The daughter and grandson whom he left were swept away and perished by their own weakness and folly, and the Gothic chiefs who took his place were no match for the power of Justinian and the genius of Belisarius. What Theodoric had built up with so much care and intelligence, and invested with such promise of order and stability, vanished utterly; nothing remained of it but the palace and tomb of its founder at Ravenna, and the echoes of the renown of the Teutonic hero of Verona, "Dietrich of Bern," in the legends of distant Germany. But in its short time of life his reign seemed like a great and successful experiment, by which the new was to be welded with the old. It seemed as if the barbarian intruders, who had caused so much mischief and even greater terror, had voluntarily and spontaneously shown a desire for improvement, and a disposition to submit to the taming and widening discipline of Italian civil order.[1]

The general character and policy of Theodoric's

[1] The important period of the barbarian settlements in Italy has been studied with their usual care by the Germans—Von Savigny, *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts;* Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte;* Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen;* Hegel, *Geschichte der Städteverfassung von Italien.* Dahn has exhibited his conceptions of the state of things which led to the overthrow of Theodoric's great attempt in a historical novel, *Ein Kampf um Rom,* which is spoiled by unfair prejudice against the Italians. English readers may look forward to a special history of this time from Mr. Thomas Hodgkin, whose first two volumes, *Italy and her Invaders,* coming down to Odoacer, which have recently appeared, promise a very interesting treatment of the Gothic and Lombard periods.

kingdom, which, as Montesquieu[1] observed, was entirely different from the plan of all the other barbarian kingdoms, is sufficiently known from the account which Jordanes has abridged from the great historical work of Cassiodorus, from the notices of the shrewd and well-informed Greek observer, Procopius, and from the collection of legal and administrative rules, which goes by the name of Theodoric's *Edict*, and which embodies the principles and spirit of his policy. But in the case of this remarkable attempt of political sagacity in one of the new race of conquerors we have something more than a general character. We have a great mass of State papers which exhibit in detail the working out of the scheme of government conceived by the Gothic king,[2] the *Variæ*, or "Miscellaneous Letters," of Cassiodorus. These letters are not, indeed, as interesting as they would have been if they had been written or dictated by Theodoric himself; if any part of the collection

[1] *Esprit des Lois*, xxx. c. 12.

[2] Cf. Dahn, *Könige der Germanen*, iii., appendix 1, p. 14. After saying that Theodoric's *Edict* proceeded from that which pervaded his whole government, his care for *civilitas*, the repression of violence either from Goths against Romans or of great men against the weaker free population, Dahn observes: "*Die Variensammlung ist überhaupt der Schlüssel zum Edict:* sie ist ein umfassender Spiegel der Zeit; sie zeigt uns jene Verhältnisse in lebendiger Bewegung, deren Ordnung das Gesetz bezweckt; dieses reiche Material aus gleichzeitiger Praxis gewährt die wichtigste Ergänzung und die richtigste Erklärung des dürftigen, und wenn isolirt betrachtet, unverständlichen Edict."

had been preserved in his own familiar mother speech, the noble Gothic tongue, which, except in the precious remains of Ulfilas's version of the Scriptures and a few unimportant fragments picked up by chance, has perished from the earth alike in Italy and Spain, where it was once the language of rulers; or even if his orders had been expressed in the rude army Latin, the dialect of the camp, which was probably the only Latin or Italian which Theodoric could speak. The letters are not of his own composition: these orders, despatches, instructions, are the work of his Italian secretary; and if anything is certain, it is that assuredly Theodoric would not himself have written as the zealous and accomplished gentleman and rhetorician wrote, to whom he gave his commands, and who transmitted them in his own form to the officials for whom they were meant. The contrast must have been remarkable in the intercourse of business or amusement, one cannot but suppose, between the great German king, who could not write his name, and had not much respect for mere literary education, but was full of large and bold ideas on the subject of governing Italy, and his ready and useful secretary, Catholic and Roman to the core, yet loyal to the service which he had embraced, brimful of curious and rather idle erudition, and inexhaustible in florid combinations of verbiage which the fashion of the time took for eloquence. If three-fourths of what we have written by Cassiodorus in the twelve books of his *Variæ* were blotted out, we should still have all,

or probably more than all, which really shows the working of the administration of which he was the mouthpiece and organ. But in those dim days we must not complain of the form in which information otherwise unattainable, and more than we could have hoped for, is preserved for our use.

Cassiodorus was a remarkable person. We must take all men with what they have of their times; the fashions which their times impose on them, the dwarfing, the distortion, the limitations, the shaping and moulding, which the general circumstances of their times cause in all who are born to grow up and live among them. He was born in an age when civilisation had run to seed, when it had been broken into by barbarian force, when great disasters and great moral corruption had eaten out vitality and strength from the still prized forms of public service and individual thought. He was all over a man in bondage to the limitations and false standards and measures of the sixth century; but he was a man of Italian activity, perseverance, and resource of mind. He had gone through a great deal of reading, and had practised diligently the application of what he had stored up of knowledge or hearsay information. He was a man, in an infinitely lower degree of course, with the encyclopædic culture of Cicero or the elder Pliny; a state official or a public servant first, but then also a man of letters, a logician, a natural philosopher, a moralist, a divine, a student and lover of art and nature. Without any of that genius which

sometimes, even under disadvantageous conditions and in rude and imperfect forms, breaks through the monotony of a degenerate and barren age, he was a man eminently useful to his generation and to those which succeeded it. He did his best for his time, and in the way and measure in which only it could derive advantage from his activity. He began with being an industrious and, as far as appears, public-spirited and upright administrator. Then in his days of leisure he compiled and digested the learning and wisdom of better times for the use of his poorly-educated contemporaries. He was a great collector of books, and earnestly encouraged their transcription and multiplication. He popularised grammar and the "liberal" sciences, as far as they survived in the schools of the day. He wrote a popular introduction to the study of Scripture. He compiled a popular ecclesiastical history of the great dogmatic struggles of the fourth and fifth centuries, the *Historia Tripartita*, from Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, which became the historical text-book of the Middle Ages. And he put together, mainly from St. Augustine, an elaborate commentary on the Book of Psalms, which conveyed the ideas and the manner of the great teacher to many who might not find it easy to get access to or to use the original works, from which Cassiodorus extracted and selected. Nor was his industry confined to theology. Besides the collection of his State papers, of which more will be said, he was the author of a work which, if it had

survived, would have been counted next in interest to the *Germania* of Tacitus—a history of the Goths in twelve books. We know it only from the abridgment of it by Jornandes, or, as he is now called, Jordanes. But though we know enough of Cassiodorus to know that his work would be diffuse and uncritical, yet Theodoric's secretary and familiar friend must have had opportunities, and the disposition to use them, of learning the legends and traditions of the Goths such as no other Roman of the time could have had; and we cannot doubt that even in the very uncongenial and unsuitable dress of Latin rhetoric, enough of their outlines and features would have appeared to show us something of the distant and dim past of that remarkable race of which the language of Ulfilas's Gospels is now almost the only thing to tell what manner of men they were.

Cassiodorus was born just when the line of the Western Emperors was coming to a close in the boy who was named in derision Romulus Augustulus (476), and who was so insignificant as to be spared by the barbarian conqueror for a life of luxury on the shores of Campania. The glory of Western Rome was quenched for many a long year, and Italy had finally come down to be the appointed prey and heritage of the stranger. This was the Italy into which Cassiodorus was born,[1] and in such an Italy his long life was spent. He saw

[1] Clinton gives 480 as the year of his birth. The Benedictine editor places it nine or ten years earlier, in 469, or 470. The earlier date is probably the true one; but there is some confusion between the different Cassiodori.

in his youth the Gothic kingdom begin under the great Theodoric (493), whose servant he early became, and whom he served to the end; he saw it overthrown, not by Italians, but by other strangers, the Moorish, Isaurian, and Hunnish bands, whom barbarian generals, Belisarius, and Narses, led to victory in the service of the Greek Empire; and he probably lived to see the next change, the coming in of the new masters, the Lombards (568). In his ninety-third year, as he himself has recorded, he was writing a treatise on orthography for the use of the monks of the monastery near Squillace, in which he passed his later years, and which he made a place of study, manuscript copying, and even of physical experiments. The date given by Clinton for his death—575—is probably too late, but cannot be far wrong. His father and his grandfather before him had filled public offices;[1] and his father had been one of those Italians who, in the confusion of the time, with all the old authority of the Imperial government overthrown, with the ancient military system of Rome utterly shattered and its spirit departed, with nothing to represent the traditions of the great commonwealth but the pretensions and conspiracies of feeble upstarts and mock emperors who were the nominees of the Barbarians, thought it the wisest thing, as well as the safest, to offer their experience and their skill to the service of those among the German chiefs who seemed most likely to be masters in Italy. The elder Cassiodorus had served

[1] V. Clinton, *Fasti Rom.* a. 493.

Odoacer in an administrative capacity, and is said to have served him loyally and well. Then, when Odoacer fell before the power of Theodoric, he continued, with the same faithfulness and from the same motives, to serve Theodoric. He brought his son into the same service. The son was an apt pupil and learned his lesson well. At a critical moment he deserved the gratitude of the new ruler by securing to his allegiance Sicily and the southern provinces of Italy, Apulia, and Bruttium.[1] He rose through the grades of the official hierarchy to the consulship and to be Prætorian Prefect at Rome. But his public life was one of much more than mere routine. The Gothic king, with his political ideas and aims, was yet as little at home in his Italian kingdom as the first Englishmen were in India. He could crush and punish; but he knew that he lived among one set of thoughts and interests and the Italians in another, and what was necessary for his policy was not fear only, but confidence, goodwill, attachment. Accordingly he attempted to use Italians in order to conciliate, to manage, to protect, to govern Italians. He thus employed Boethius and Symmachus. Apparently with still greater confidence he thus employed the younger Cassiodorus. Cassiodorus was his secretary, from whom he sought information and counsel, and by whom his orders and instructions

[1] *Var.* i. 3, 4. Clinton refers this to the father (*F. R.* 493); but the matter is not clear. It depends on the question whether the son was ever "Patrician." See the Preface to his Collection. In this, he certainly does not mention the Patriciat in the list of his own dignities.

were interpreted and transmitted to the Italian civil authorities and sometimes to Gothic ones. The position of Cassiodorus was very much like that of an Italian minister in the service of a benevolent Austrian viceroy or governor of Lombardy; he was such a man, both in his usefulness and in his obsequiousness, as the Lombard nobles, Beccaria, and Cristiani, and Pallavicini, and Verri, who served Maria Theresa and Joseph II. at Milan.

In his days of leisure, when he had retired to his monastery in Bruttium, after escaping the storms which swept away his and his master's work in Italy, and in which Boethius perished and the Gothic kingdom was wrecked, the energetic old man, among his other literary employments, collected, at the request of his friends, he says, as many as he could find of his despatches and State papers, and arranged them in twelve books. It had been a way with Romans, ever since Cicero set the fashion, to collect and publish their letters, if they had been engaged in affairs, or if they thought they could write well; and the habit continued through the early and middle ages to later days. The examples of Pliny, of Cyprian, of Augustine, of Jerome, were followed in this age by Sidonius, the elder Symmachus, and Ennodius; the widespread business of the Popes and the growing importance of their letters made a regular "Regestum," and an establishment of clerks and transcribers, a matter of course at Rome; and the great collection of the letters of Gregory the Great attested its industry

and its business-like method. With such precedents, almost every man in a prominent place made it his duty to preserve his own letters. They were not always worth keeping for the reasons for which they were kept. But this is a department of literature in which the self-complacency of authorship has incidentally done great service to knowledge. Letters are the great checks on professed and studied narratives. They give the aspect of transactions as they appeared at the moment and on the spot, either to the actors or to bystanders looking on. And they preserve and exhibit often in full work institutions and arrangements of which otherwise no record is kept, because they are known to every one, and are part of every one's daily life. The Collection of Cassiodorus, the most extensive yet made in the later times of Rome, is the only thing which gives us anything like a detailed and real picture of the beginnings of that long servitude of Italy to the "barbarian," which, once begun, continued almost to the present day. We may pardon a good deal—and there is a good deal to pardon—in so authentic and so indispensable an informant.

The characteristic weaknesses of Cassiodorus come out in the account which he gives of the origin of this collection. He was exceedingly vain of his learning, his rhetorical abundance and richness, and his skill and tact in affairs. But he followed the fashion of ostentatious self-depreciation, and he presents this monument of his labours in the public

service with a transparent and amusing air of mock modesty. His accomplished friends, he says in the Preface to his letters, pressed him to collect into one work all that he had from time to time in his numerous and important offices put forth for the purpose of throwing light on public business or expediting it; posterity, they said, ought to know all the toil and trouble he had gone through in the public service, and would be glad of such knowledge. He doubts. Posterity, he thinks, is more likely to think differently from his too partial friends, and to find his papers very dry and uninteresting; and, besides, they are so hurriedly and rudely written. His friends ought to remember the circumstances under which they were composed; the impatience of applicants waiting attention; the answers which had to be written on the spur of the moment and could not be recalled or amended. The great masters of style bid you keep your compositions till the ninth year, and he had not an hour to think of the proprieties of composition; as soon as he began to write, the noise and hurry round him made it impossible to write with care.

"One man," he says, "overwhelms me with a stream of captious questions; another worries me with the burden of his distresses; others compass me about with furious and mutinous demands. And then you ask for fine writing and style! Why, I have hardly time to find the plainest words for my meaning. All my nights are haunted by endless anxieties lest food should fail in the towns, where people care a great deal more for what satis-

fies their bellies than what pleases their ears ; further, we have to move about the provinces and see how our orders are obeyed, for it will not do with military people to issue commands unless there are civil authorities to see them carried out. Please do not love me so unkindly as to press me to publish."

And then come all the answers—they are his own reasons for the publication ; the high stations he had filled, up to that of Prætorian Prefect ; the concentration in one hand of all public business (the pay of the army, the sustenance of the population, the administration of justice) ; his whole time devoted, without interruption, to the public good ; his high character for stainless integrity and hereditary virtue ; the confidence and familiarity of great princes ; the power, so rare a possession, of producing, amid such occupations, anything that was valuable for readers ; the great use to others of his State papers, as precedents and models ; finally, the opportunity of doing due honour to the distinguished personages to whom his letters were addressed, or of whom they made mention. "You restrain vice by your authority," he supposes his friends to say to him ; "you crush the audacity of the transgressor ; you restore its terrors to the law ; and yet you doubt about publishing what must conduce to such great ends. You hide, so to speak, the mirror which reflects your mind from the view of posterity."

He yielded, he tells us, to the representations of his friends, and collected his letters for public reading.

But it is amusing, when we come to the letters, to find the form into which he has cast these State papers and despatches. He deprecates criticism for the *agrestis sermo* into which hurry and pressure of business forced him; he had no time to choose words and discriminate meanings. He apologises for hasty and unpolished phrases; he also has had to adapt his style to occasions, and the fastidious may even find fault with what is to his credit, that in addressing inferior persons he has suited his speech to their capacity or their importance. But how shall the real style of the letters be described? There used to be, and probably still is, in Italy, a class of persons found there only, called *improvisatori*. Give these persons a subject of whatever kind, and forthwith they start off without hesitation or pause into a poetical composition about it, pouring forth an uninterrupted flow of words, allusions, figures, usually of a very commonplace kind, but with an affluence which is amazing and seems inexhaustible. Except that Cassiodorus writes prose and not verse, this is the kind of impression which his letters produce. They are State papers put into the hand of an *improvisatore* to throw into form, and composed with his luxuriant verbiage, and also with his coarse taste. The shortest instructions begin with an aphorism or an epigram. If they are more important or lengthy, they sparkle and flash with conceits and antitheses, and every scrap of learning, every bit of science or natural history, every far-fetched coincidence which may start up in the

writer's memory, however remote in its bearing on the subject, is dragged in to exalt or illustrate it, though the subject itself may be of the plainest and most matter-of-fact kind. You read through a number of elaborate sentences, often tumid and pompous, sometimes felicitous and pointed, but all of the most general and abstract sort; and, nestling in the thick of them, towards the end of the letter or paper, you come upon the order, or instruction, or notification, for which the letter or paper is written, almost smothered and lost in the abundance of ornament round it. They show what the Latin schools had come to towards the close of the Empire. It is exactly analogous to the flabby degeneration which came on the Italian language on the final extinction of Italian liberties under the foreign masters, Spanish and German, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

But though the form be so bad, the substance deserves a different judgment. They are the letters of a man who was doing his best to uphold justice, to protect the oppressed, to curb the lawless, and to secure as much quiet and happiness to his country and his people as under the hard conditions of the time could be assured to them. It was not a time when an Italian could speak of liberty and greatness in the old tones. It was not a time when, if he was wise, he would dream of striking a blow for independence, or of attempting to call forth the temper and strength of ancient Rome in generations which had such a history of irretrievable and fixed decay.

Vengeance had come to the uttermost on the guilty "Lady of Kingdoms." "She that was great among the nations and princess among the provinces—she was become tributary;" and Italy lay, an exhausted and paralysed body, incapable of raising an arm in her own cause, condemned to see whatever victories were won on her own soil used, not for herself, but for the profit of the strangers who fought for her possession, Greek or German. She was condemned for her monstrous sins, and this was her hour of punishment. None of her sons could hope to deliver her out of the hand of the nations round her, to whom the strength of the world had passed. She had not in her population the materials for a national army to assert her independence against the East and North, against the discipline and resources of Byzantium, against the manliness and massive strength and enthusiasm for war of the German tribes. She had lost the traditions of soldiership; there was no bond of union and reciprocal trust; it was idle to hope that her conquerors would give time to raise and organise an Italian force for Italian purposes. Anyhow, there was no one to do it. Her noblest children only thought how they might mitigate the tyranny and relieve the sufferings which they could not prevent. Boethius, when he recollects what he had suffered in his love for Italy, has no visions of freedom, no words about breaking the yoke off her neck.[1] He only recounts what he had done in the cause of justice and

[1] Boet. *Phil. Consol.*, i. 4.

mercy, as the minister and magistrate of her Gothic master. He had brought on himself the enmity of the bad, and had offended the powerful by standing up for right. He had withstood Conigast in his assaults on the fortunes of the weak; he had resisted the barbaric avarice of the king's chamberlain, Triggvilla; he had rescued Paulinus from the jaws of the "dogs of the palace," who were thirsting for his blood and his possessions. He had maintained the claims and honour of the Senate. But Boethius, in opening his heart to Philosophy, the Consoler, breathes not a word to show that he had ever thought, as an Italian patriot, of delivering Italy from her conquerors. Indeed, he disclaims it. He makes a merit of loyal service to the Goths, not of efforts and hopes for the enfranchisement of Italy.

The first letter in the collection of Cassiodorus shows the character which, between them, Theodoric and his Italian secretary desired to give to the German conquest of Italy. It is a letter addressed to the Greek Emperor, Anastasius, sent with an embassy commissioned to arrange some differences which threatened peace. It assumes that the Roman Empire is intact, and that the Roman Emperor is unique in his greatness and dignity among the rulers of the earth; and, without for a moment or by a single word compromising his own independence, Theodoric is made by his secretary to claim a Roman dignity for his crown, and to feel it his highest honour to govern Romans in concert and harmony with the

Empire and after the emperors' example. It was a position like that adopted by the great bishops of Africa or Alexandria towards the Roman See; any amount of honour for it, but not a jot of their own independence conceded in the acknowledgment.

You are the fairest beauty of all kingdoms, you are the shield and safeguard of the world which other rulers acknowledge, because they recognise in you something peerless, and we especially, who, by God's help, have learned in your commonwealth how to rule over Romans with equity. Our rule is modelled on yours, the transcript of a good design, the copy of an empire which has no fellow. Just in proportion as we follow you we are before all other nations. You urge me to cherish the Senate, to embrace with favour the imperial laws, to bind together all the interests of Italy. How can you exclude from your august peace him whom you would not wish to see alienated from your ways? And there is besides the tie of reverence which binds you to the city of Rome, which they cannot break who have joined themselves in the unity of that name. . . . We cannot think that you will allow that between the two states (*respublicæ*), which, as it is clear, under the former princes always formed one body, any discord can be permanent. They ought not only to be connected by a barren amity, but to be mutually assisted by each other's power. In the Roman kingdom let there be but one will, but one sentiment. Whatever we can do shall be at the service of your commands.[1]

The collection of letters and State papers composed by Cassiodorus in the name of Theodoric supply in numberless and varied forms the commentary on this: that is, they exhibit the effort to continue under

[1] "Romani regni unum velle, una semper opinio sit."—i. 1.

the new and foreign rule the customary and traditional administration of Roman experience and of Roman civilised government. Forms and machinery are preserved. All the framework of the official hierarchy is kept, and exhibited in the *Formulæ* or commissions composed by Cassiodorus. Consulars and Patricians and Prætorian Præfects and Quæstors—very different from their republican namesakes—Counts of the first order and the second, all are as carefully distinguished as in the *Notitia* itself, or in the order of a modern court and administration; and, further, the arrangements and regulations of the Roman finance and revenue system are all continued. There is, of course, the plain fact which no fictions or accommodations could get rid of or disguise, that Italy, with its lands and populations, had changed masters; and that its masters, in the last resort, whether they are moderate and reasonable masters, or cruel and greedy ones, were Goths and conquerors. But there is also visible the serious desire that this condition of things should be made as easy as possible for the dethroned and partially dispossessed race; that they should be taught to consider and feel themselves one with the new comers, possessed of an equal interest in the land and committed to the same fortunes; that they should be persuaded of the sincerity of the king's care for their welfare and purpose to protect and benefit them. Theodoric wished that they should be convinced that the famous Roman virtue of justice, with the methods for carrying

it out, of which Romans were so proud, was of equal value in the eyes of Goths; and that Goths, while fairly proud on their side of their prowess and achievements, were not ashamed to own themselves inferior in historical renown, and in the arts of peace to those whom they wished to call their Roman fellow-citizens, and could even honestly afford, in comparison with elder brethren who had had such a splendid history, to confess themselves "barbarians." These objects of Theodoric's policy are of course expressed the more emphatically by passing through the mind and by being illustrated by the rhetoric of an Italian penman. But Cassiodorus never could have given the orders which he did, or drawn up the *Formulæ*[1] in which he describes the business and duties of the various officers of the State, from the Consul, Patrician, and Prætorian Præfect, the Vicar of Rome, the Duke of the Rhætias, and the Counts of the Goths, down to the chiefs of police at Rome and Ravenna, the heads of the medical staff, the superintendents of the lime-kilns and the armouries, the masters of the mint and the notaries, tax-collectors, and police, unless he was pretty clear about what his master meant him to say. He was too intimate and familiar with Theodoric to mistake him, and Theodoric was too formidable a person to deceive or misinterpret.

The leading and prominent subject of the papers is undoubtedly the enforcement and maintenance of right and justice. There were two classes of questions

[1] *Variæ*, books vi. and vii.

which under the circumstances of the time were continually requiring the interference of a just ruler. There were questions about the collection of the revenue, and questions arising from the changes in property consequent on the barbarian settlements in Italy. In both these matters the orders which Cassiodorus was commissioned to put into shape and to transmit show watchfulness, humanity, and the desire to uphold equity and right against the encroachments of power or the privilege of race. Thus, it is one of the commonplaces of history that one of the causes of the downfall of the Empire was the inequality and oppression of the fiscal administration. It was not only, or so much, that the assessment of revenue demanded for the State was excessive, though this at times was the case; it was that the collection was partial and unjust. The revenue consisted mainly of two great portions, customary poll taxes and ground rents, or land tax, and a varying taxation professedly revised and assessed anew every fifteen years; and each province and *curia*, or municipality, had its portion assigned of the general sum, which it was bound to make up in a lump to the treasury. But in the repartition of these imposts on the estates of a province or the individuals of the *curia* there was room for all kinds of unfairness. Powerful men set at nought their obligations; crafty men, on one pretence or another, sometimes by entering into the service of the Church, wriggled out of them. Corrupt or lazy collectors lined their pockets or saved them-

selves trouble by making those who were in their power pay for those who evaded or defied them. All the tricks and villanies of uncontrolled tax-farming and tax-gathering were practised, and drove the wretched tax-payers to despair. Men ran away from their property, or were sold up for hopeless debts. The collection of Cassiodorus shows how sensible Theodoric was to evils which were destroying the resources of the kingdom and the peace and happiness of its inhabitants. The senators at Rome, the great landed proprietors throughout Italy, were the great offenders.[1] Theodoric appeals to their honour and their pride. They had inherited their great place, he tells them, that they might set a public example of justice and sense of duty; but it had appeared from the official reports of his judges and inspectors for the provinces that the great senatorial houses had paid little or nothing of their quota to the revenue. The consequence was that the collectors had turned upon the poorer proprietors on the spot, and had increased their burdens to make up the full sum of the assessment, to the great damage of the provinces. The king proceeds to require the Conscript Fathers, who are equally bound with him to exert themselves for the common weal, to pay their assessment for the year in the usual three instalments; and he informs them that he intends to make this order public in the provinces, that any person who has been aggrieved may know that justice is to be had. And accordingly

[1] ii. 24.

he sends a circular to the provinces, setting forth these abuses in the collection of the revenue, declaring his intention to stop them, and inviting all proprietors or members of municipalities (*possessores sive curiales*), who have been unjustly surcharged on account of the default of others, to make their complaints. He is as peremptory with the Gothic defaulters of Adria,[1] who probably did not see why such valiant soldiers as themselves should be taxed like provincials, and who, if they had been allowed, would have left their quota of the taxes to be added to that of their Italian neighbours and to be paid by them. His language is a remarkable testimony to the silent resignation with which the provincials endured the oppression of the fiscal officials, and which Theodoric invites them to break.[2]

> The voice of suffering is ordinarily loud. People, when they are aggrieved, do not usually restrain themselves, and the mind of the injured feeds itself with outcries. Still language will flow forth more freely if it is set at liberty by our authority. Now we hate that the wretched should be oppressed. We are distressed at the wrongs of men who make no complaint. The sufferings which the victims hide reach us all the more swiftly.

This regard for equity appears in another form in the care taken that a grant to one person of exemption from a fiscal burden should not increase those of his neighbours. In a letter to the proprietors and muni-

[1] i. 19; cf. Hegel, *Geschichte der Städteverfassung von Italien*, i. p. 107.

[2] ii. 25.

cipal authorities of Trent, Theodoric informs them that he has granted a property free of taxes to Butilianus the priest.[1] But he says that he does not choose that his liberality should be hurtful to others; and so he deducts from the sum total of their assessment the portion of it chargeable on the land of Butilianus, and remitted to him, which otherwise would have been thrown on the other tax-payers. "We will not have that contributed by others which we have excused in an individual case; lest—what God forbid—a deserving man's reward should be an innocent man's loss." After a time of distress he suspends the excise on wine, corn, and oil, levied, according to ancient custom, at markets and harbours;[2] the provinces needed rest after hard times, and ships must not be frightened away from the ports by the collectors, who often inflicted more damage on them than the sea itself. The march of armies,[3] even friendly ones, was usually a terrible scourge to the provinces. Theodoric takes off the yearly contribution from the provincials of the Cottian Alps, the dwellers in the Valley of Susa, because the passage of the Gothic troops had unavoidably damaged those for whom they fought.

But this anxiety to be just, and to improve the methods of collecting the revenue, is combined with keen vigilance for the revenue itself. "That it is

[1] ii. 17; cf. Savigny, *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts*, i. 334, who wrongly infers from this the Goths were as such exempt from municipal taxes. [2] iv. 19. [3] iv. 36.

our wish to oppress no one," he says, "is no reason why we should lose what is our due."[1] Officials are warned not to let the taxes which are due on three terms in the year fall into arrear; it is in the interest of the tax-payer that his debt should not grow through the collector's easy carelessness. "In a certain way kindness becomes the mother of harshness, when you first neglect to give a man notice of what is due from him, and afterwards are compelled to exact it from him."[2] Not unnaturally, the conquering race did not always see why they should have to pay rent and taxes like the Romans; the Gothic settlers in Tuscany and Picenum were refractory and fell into arrears, and a strict commission was issued to bring them to reason.[3] It was necessary, the king says, to stop "this kind of extravagance in the beginning, or it would spread;" and accordingly the houses of those who would not pay were to be seized for the treasury, and the ungrateful military settlers, who, besides their "donative" as soldiers, had received their lands from the king's bounty, as they would not pay the little that was due from them, were to lose much.

One of the great difficulties of the state of things with which Theodoric had to deal, in carrying out his policy of conciliation and fusion, must, of course, have been the relations between the two races. He claimed that they had become one; he wished that they should appear so to themselves and to the world; he saw that the strength of his kingdom depended on

[1] i. 19. [2] iii. 8. [3] iv. 14.

the two nations working willingly together. But, whatever he might wish, they could not forget what each was to the other, any more than at the best of times English and Irish, Austrians and Lombards, have been able to forget it. Yet, as far as it appears, he did his best to avoid the faults so easily and so commonly committed under like circumstances. He kept a strong check on the claims of the conquering race. He showed the most frank and willing readiness to do full justice to those of the conquered race. The following are the terms of a commission of a provincial "Count of the Goths," addressed to the people over whom he was placed:—[1]

Seeing that, by God's help, we know that there are Goths dwelling and mingled among you, we have thought it necessary, lest among neighbours there should arise, as is wont, any want of order, to send to you [*So-and-so*], a right honourable person, well approved to us by his good behaviour, as count. It will be his business, according to our edicts, if any matter arise between Goth and Goth, to decide it; if a controversy should arise between a Goth and a Roman, he shall call in a prudent Roman as assessor, and shall settle the dispute according to right. But between two Romans, Romans are to hear the case—that is, the judges whom we appoint throughout the provinces.[2] Thus every one's rights will be maintained, and under a diversity of judges one and the same rule of justice will embrace all. Thus joined in a bond of common peace, both nations, by God's favour, may enjoy a happy tranquillity. But know ye, that we have equally a love towards all; he, however, will best recommend himself to our regard who restrains his will and is well affected to the laws. We love not

[1] vii. 3.

[2] Cf. iii. 13.

aught unbecoming the life of a citizen (*aliquid incivile*); we detest the wickedness of insolence with all who are guilty of it. Violence is hateful to our love of mercy. In matters of judgment let the laws prevail, not the strong arm. You, who all form one kingdom, shape your objects of life in common. Let each people hear what we value. Let the Romans be your neighbours in love as they are in possessions; and you, Romans, ought heartily to love the Goths, who increase the numbers of your population in peace, and who in war are the defenders of the whole commonwealth.

Goths and Romans could not but be distinct in feelings and ways of life, and it is assumed everywhere that the calling of the Goths was war, and that of the Romans peace.[1] But, as far as Theodoric could do it, their equal rights were maintained.[2] The Roman machinery of civil life was sedulously and universally kept up; any invasion of Roman civil rights called forth rebuke and repression. A question of disputed possession between a Roman and a "barbarian"[3] is settled on this principle: if the "barbarian" took possession since the day when Theodoric won his victory on the Isonzo (489), the victory which gave him Italy, the claimant must produce his written title; if it was before that date, Theodoric refuses to be responsible for anything that took place

[1] See viii. 3; xii. 5: "Dum belligerat Gothorum exercitus, sit in pace Romanus;" iii. 38: "Vivat noster exercitus civiliter cum Romanis."

[2] Cf. i. 27: "Si *exterarum gentium* [*i.e.* the "barbarians"] *mores sub lege moderamur; si juri Romano servit quidquid sociatur Italiæ. . . .*" And iii. 36: "Cum moris nostri sit *ad leges cuncta referre.*"

[3] i. 18.

before he was king, or to open any controversy about it.

Theodoric's anxiety to introduce habits of law and order among his barbarian subjects is illustrated by two letters[1] relating to the population which had taken the place of the Goths in their old seats by the Danube and the Drave, that part of the old Pannonia of which Sirmium, not far from the modern Belgrade, was the capital. They were probably a mixture of races—Herules, Gepids, and Suabes—who had followed in the track of the Goths as the Goths moved westward; but they formed part of what Theodoric claimed as his kingdom. He sends a governor to keep them in order, and to accustom them to the rule of impartial law and justice. He is a person with the singular name of Colossæus. The proper names which occur in Cassiodorus are often curious, and suggest questions as to the intermixture and dispersion of races which are now perhaps beyond our reach to answer. To this Colossæus Theodoric gives his commission, and further commends him to the people whom he is to govern—"Universis Barbaris et Romanis per Pannoniam constitutis, Theodoricus Rex." There are two points which are worth noticing in these letters. One is that the particular "barbarous" custom which Theodoric wants to put down is that of the duel, or judicial combat.

This further we wish to say to you, is the king's address to the population, that you should seek to direct

[1] iii. 23, 24.

your courage, not against yourselves, but against the enemy. Let not trifles urge you to extremities. Be content with justice, in which the world rejoices. Why should you have recourse to a duel when you have a judge who cannot be bribed? Lay aside your swords, as you have no foe. It is an evil thing to lift your arm against your kinsmen, for whom you ought with glory to die. What is the use of the tongue to man if it is his armed hand which pleads his cause? or how can it be believed that there is peace if under civilised order (*sub civilitate*) men still fight?

"Make them contend," says the commission to Colossæus, "with words rather than weapons. Let them not count it a reproach to lose their cause."

The other point is the amusing self-complacency with which the example of the Goths, and their progress in the ways of order and civilisation, are held up for the imitation of their less advanced barbarian kinsfolk. "Favour justice," the king writes to Colossæus; "protect with courage innocence of heart; so that, in contrast to the evil customs of the Nations, you may hold up the justice of the Goths, who have ever so kept the mean of excellence, that they had both the wisdom of the Romans and the prowess of the Nations." "Imitate our Goths," he writes to his Pannonian subjects, "who know how to fight when abroad and to be self-controlled at home. We desire you so to live as by God's help you see that our kinsfolk have flourished."

It is this strong desire for justice, for conciliation, for a good understanding between his various subjects,

for their protection, for their welfare, for the improvement and advancement of their conditions of life, and the visible care and forethought for these objects appearing throughout this miscellaneous collection of public papers, which impart strength and substance to the idea of Theodoric's rule which they present. But for this it might easily seem that the interest shown by him in the results and adjuncts of Roman civilisation was merely a thin veneer over the still untamed coarseness of barbarian habits and character. That the natural fierceness of the barbarian chief was not yet tamed in the King of Italy appeared but too clearly in the outbreak of savage cruelty towards the end of his reign, in which Boethius perished. But it is impossible to read these curious documents without seeing through the rhetoric of the Latin secretary how thoroughly in earnest his great German master was in his wish to govern justly, wisely, temperately. We know too little to be able to say how his instructions were carried out. Self-will was powerful; distances were great between the King and the Præfect, and between the Præfect and the provincial Count. Every order, too, which we read in Cassiodorus may not have been of Theodoric's dictation; something, perhaps much, may have been left to the secretary's own responsibility and judgment. But the general outline of the purpose of government is too strongly drawn to be mistaken. A Roman with Christian ideas of right, with the ideas of these State papers about the reconciliation of conqueror and con-

quered, could not have continued so long to be the confidential and actively employed minister of the Gothic king, if the Gothic king, with all his shortcomings, had not had the instincts, the wisdom, the high ambition, which were afterwards to be seen on a grander scale in the great Frank emperor.

But a collection of Parliamentary blue-books could not contain a more miscellaneous assortment of subjects than the *Variæ* of Cassiodorus. The first letter in the collection is a grand assertion of the unity of the Roman Empire, and of Romans and barbarians in government and interest. The second is a wonderful objurgation of a negligent provincial officer, whose business it was to provide purple dye for the silk and woollen of the king's robes. The dye was produced at Hydruntum or Otranto, from a shell-fish, the *murex*, the collection of which, and the preparation from it of the dye, employed a great number of persons, and appears to have been superintended by a State official. Cassiodorus is not content with scolding this officer as if he had been guilty of something as bad as treason, but he takes the opportunity of showing how he can describe in grand language the very disgusting process by which the coveted purple was produced from heaps of the rotting and stinking shell-fish. But the tone in which the superintendent of the manufacture is taken to task for his delays is curious.

> We have learned from the report of Count Stephen [it is Theodoric who is supposed to speak] that the work

of the Sacred robes, which we wish to be completed with the necessary speed, is suspended, and the making of them interrupted ; and it is clear that you are the person who, by withholding a usual supply, have produced this abominable delay ; for we are convinced that some negligence must have occurred to cause that the milky tresses of silk, twice or thrice dipped, have yet blushed less than they ought with that most beautiful intoxication, or that the wool has not drunk the choicest quality of the adorable purple. So that if the inspector of the sea at Otranto had collected the shell-fish which give the dye, in the usual way, and at the right time, that Neptunian heap, the parent of the ever-blooming purple, the adorner of the throne, dissolved with abundance of rains, would have set free the courtly shower with its flame-coloured liquid. That colour, in the overpowering charm of its freshness, that blushing darkness, that crimson blackness, distinguishes the ruler, points out the lord, and is the warrant to the human race that it cannot be mistaken in its prince's countenance.

Then, after enlarging on the very disagreeable process of preparing the dye from the fish—they were left for six months to rot, "till even to the most sagacious of nostrils they ceased to be noisome"—he proceeds with his invective against the unlucky defaulter.

If no part of the usual process of preparation was left out, we wonder that you did not recollect your own dangers, considering that it is the guilt of sacrilege to offend in respect of such robes. What are they about, all these workmen, all these crews of sailors, all these families of labourers? You, too, with the dignity of a count, give orders to such numbers, you fence yourself round with the prestige of so great a name, that you are thought

almost to act the king, you seem in many things to be despotic over your fellow-citizens. Your negligence is a blow to this position, which had both given you a high place in the province and was the occasion of your appearing with honour in the presence of your prince. So that, if regard for your own interest does not forsake you, if you have any feeling for your own safety, within such and such a day after the bearer of this reaches you hasten to come with the dye, which you have been accustomed to provide every year for our wardrobe; for we shall send you not a commissioner, but an avenger, if you imagine that you may trifle with any further delays."

The fidgety letter about purple dyes is a curious survival of the Oriental ideas of pomp which had gradually, under the Cæsars, worked their way into the Latin world; the occasion, the temper, the etiquette of phrases, as about the "*Sacred* robes," the rhetoric and taste are what might be looked for in a Persian or Syrian court rather than in that of Theodoric. But it was part of Theodoric's policy to enter into the fashions and humours of his Latin subjects, as well as to care for their substantial prosperity. As at Rome it was the mode to take a side with one or other of the colours in the circus, the Green or the Blue, Theodoric, probably at the suggestion of Cassiodorus,[1] confers his patronage on the Greens; and as party feeling ran high, and resulted in rioting and some high-handed proceedings on the part of powerful Blues, the great Gothic king and his minister have to send letter after letter to the authorities at Rome instructing them to take care that the Green party,

[1] i. 20, 21, 27, 31-33.

and especially the favourers of Helladius,[1] the pantomime dancer, have their fair chance, and that if the jealousy of the opposite party leads to foul play, the culprits, however high their rank, are to be made an example of. But these letters are adverted to only to illustrate the multifarious character of the collection, and to show how the administration under the great barbarian king descended into minute details which might have been thought entirely alien from his habits and interests. The bulk of the papers refer to much more serious matters, though everywhere the letters abound with curious and often instructive particulars. The care of the king appears in them for the repair, the adornment, the defence, of his cities, for the reclaiming of waste lands and the draining of those marshes which were then, as they are now, the plague of Italy, for keeping the aqueducts and sewers in good order, for the provisioning of the provinces, for the encouragement of such trade and commerce as existed—and in spite of wars and invasions there was a good deal—for the protection of harbours, the regulation of the postal service established under the Empire, as well as for the due administration of justice, and the alleviation of the burdens which war and marching armies brought upon the sorely stricken provinces. And alternating with these subjects we have instructions to individual officers on service, decisions, which usually seem equitable ones, on individual cases of hardship or

[1] i. 32.

distress brought to the king's knowledge, and all that interference of the supreme power in the cause of the poor and helpless which, though it belongs to a rude and imperfect stage of government, is yet, till government has attained its higher stages of improved responsibility, the only real remedy against the inevitable abuses of power in the hands of subordinate agents. As all these letters were called for by special cases—by reports, complaints, appeals, petitions for grants—they throw such a light on the actual working of the machine of government as no general account of the time, even if such existed, could supply. They show very close attention to the current business and wants of the kingdom; they show the kind of difficulties and questions which arose where the old and the new were daily meeting, and the ambitious and sanguine German was trying to infuse new life into the exhausted and damaged frame of Italian civilisation, both in its rural and its civic forms. And though they only show us part of what was going on under the Gothic rule, and show it as through the eyes of an Italian who was the devoted servant of the barbarian king, they leave the impression of remarkable industry, good sense, and honesty in administering the State, and of a sincere attempt to repair the ruins which war and misgovernment had made in Italy. "Nos, quibus cordi est in melius cuncta mutare,"[1] was no idle boast, whether applied to what Cassiodorus calls the "tellus naufraga" of the stagnant

[1] ii. 21; cf. iii. 31.

and useless marshes of Spoleto, or to the still more truly "shipwrecked land" which once had been the seat of the empire of the world.

Two features are very characteristic of these curious letters. One is, as has been already noticed, the style. They belong, as every one knows, to a declining time of Latin literature; but yet it was a time when the great models of Latin writing were still admired. It was not so long ago since St. Augustine was writing with wonderful force and command of the language, and contemporaries of Cassiodorus, like Boethius, though a long way from the classical writers in style and vocabulary, were still writing clearly and unaffectedly. But the first thing that strikes the reader of Cassiodorus is his grandiloquence. He is a master of what, we believe, is now called "high faluting." The simplest orders must be given in strained and pompous language: and as the words which he chooses are frequently used with a turn and colour not familiar in classical Latin, his instructions are sometimes obscure and hard to construe. But it is not the language only. His idea of an official document, an appointment, an ordinary command, a set of instructions, is the oddest conceivable. He always, or almost always, begins with a general maxim, from the truth and importance of which he deduces the particular order which he has to convey; and he usually clenches the order with another generality. Thus:[1]—

[1] ii. 23.

To Ampelius, Despotius, and Theodulus, senators, King Theodoric.

It becomes the discipline of our time that they who give themselves to what is useful to the public should not be hindered with unnecessary burdens. Nor is it fitting that any one's ill-will should prejudice our customary arrangements. Wherefore apply your industry strenuously to the potteries granted you by royal authority; and fear not that you can be transferred to other employments, considering that we hardly believe that you can accomplish what is at present enjoined on you. There shall be an end, then, once for all, to the wicked interference of bad men, and our authority shall bring to nought the success of obscure intrigues. For *he* hates in vain, against whom the clemency of the prince presents its shield.

This is a type of numberless letters. Never was an official in his public correspondence so "full of wise saws and modern instances," brought from every department of nature, history, and literature. The king gives leave to the sons of Ecdicius,[1] who want to attend their father's funeral, to be absent from Rome: for Theodoric was very strict in not allowing Romans of rank to leave Rome without reason or for an indefinite time, it being a great point with him to keep up the population and the attractions of the capital.[2] But his secretary is not content with simply giving the permission; he gives in antithetic sentences the reasons for paying the last honours to the dead.

Mourning is inconsolable when we may not be present at the burial of our dead; for a man never can forgive

[1] ii. 22. [2] *e.g.* iv. 48.

himself who has not paid due honour to their ashes. With what a ransom did not Priam redeem Hector? He besought Achilles in the height of his wrath: he knelt before him armed as he was; he preferred to risk his own life to defrauding the corpse of its due.

Again, he orders the execution of some slaves who had killed their master and left him unburied. He enlarges on the atrocity of their crime, and he proceeds to compare human beings with vultures, very much to the disadvantage of the former.

Alas! alas! kindness is found in birds of the air which is forgotten by mankind. The vulture itself, which lives on the corpses of the dead, this huge creature is known not to molest the smaller birds, but when the hawk attacks the life of the feathered race the vulture smites it with its wings, tears it with its beak, and with all its force tries to help those in danger. And these men cannot spare one whom they know to be their fellow-man! The vulture will not kill in order that it may feed; these servants chose to kill him who in his lifetime had been wont to feed them. Let *him*, then, become the repast of the pious vulture who had the heart so cruelly to wish for the death of the shepherd. It is well that he should be allotted such a sepulchre, who caused his master to be without burial.[1]

But he has a still more curious habit. He is always ready to turn a purely business letter on the most matter-of-fact subject into a regular dissertation on physics, mechanics, philosophy, or history. Thus he has to write in the king's name to Boethius, informing him that the chiefs of the bodyguard have

[1] ii. 19.

sent in a joint complaint to the king that their pay was given them in coin which was under weight, and commanding Boethius to see that so serious and so dangerous a malpractice was set right.[1] But then the secretary makes the king go off into a long series of reflections on the properties and value of the art of arithmetic—"*hæc quæ appellatur arithmetica, inter ambigua mundi certissima ratione consistit*"—and from this, into considerations on the importance of true weights and measures. These sentences and maxims are often vigorous and striking enough, but they have obviously nothing to do with the real business of the letter; they are grotesque when imagined in the mouth of the Gothic king, and it is too plain that they are simply put in to show off the secretary's varied knowledge and power of fine writing. Another letter of the same kind, also to Boethius, tells him that Gundibald, King of the Burgundians, had asked Theodoric to send him a water-clock; and Boethius is requested to apply his renowned mechanical skill to its construction.[2] All this is spun out into a long epistle. The policy of Theodoric suggests that the neighbouring kings should be kept in good humour by compliance with their requests for presents—toys and mechanical inventions—which in Italy every one is familiar with, but which abroad among Burgundians and such like are miraculous.[3] Then Boethius's

[1] i. 10. [2] i. 45, 46.

[3] "Spernenda non sunt quæ a vicinis regibus præsumptionis gratia postulantur; dum plerumque res parvæ plus prævalent

learning and scientific attainments are set forth, and the marvels which physical science has achieved are enumerated with as much enthusiasm as they might be by a modern lecturer, in a catalogue which, though indistinct from the poetical terms employed, contains some curious details of the application of chemical and mechanical arts. And then after some rather fine bursts about the victories of science over nature —"o artis inæstimabilis virtus, quæ dum se dicit ludere, naturæ prævalet secreta vulgare;" or again,

præstare quam magnæ possunt obtinere divitiæ. Frequenter enim quod arma explere nequeunt, oblectamenta suavitatis imponunt. Sit ergo pro republica et cum ludere videamur. Nam ideo voluptuosa quærimus, ut per ipsa seria compleamus. Burgundionum itaque Dominus a nobis magnopere postulavit ut horologium . . . ei transmittere deberemus . . . Quod nobis est quotidianum, illis videtur esse miraculum." The two letters are curious. Their tone *about* the Burgundians is that of a civilised European talking of a king and people of Siam or Ashantee: "Agnoscant per te exteræ gentes, tales nos habere nobiles, quales leguntur auctores. Quoties non sunt crediturі quod viderint; quoties hanc veritatem lusoria somnia putabunt? et quando fuerint a stupore conversi, non audebunt se æquales nobis dicere, apud quos sciunt sapientes talia cogitasse." The tone *to* the Burgundian king is that of a patronising invitation to appreciate the inventions of Gothic and Roman civilisation: "Habetote in vestra patria, quod aliquando vidistis [*e.g.* in 473, when Gundibald named Glycerius emperor] in civitate Romana. . . . Discat sub vobis Burgundia res subtilissimas inspicere, et antiquorum inventa laudare, per quos propositum gentile deponit." And then the advantages to Burgundy of having a *Horologium* are set forth: "Distinguat spatia diei, actibus suis horarum aptissime momenta constituat. Ordo vitæ confusus agitur, si talis discretio sub veritate nescitur. Belluarum quippe ritus est ex ventris esurie horas sentire."

"mechanicus, si fas est dicere, pene *socius est naturæ*, occulta reserans, manifesta convertens, miraculis ludens"—sentences which have a Baconian ring about them—Boethius is instructed to make the clock.

The other feature to be noticed is equally characteristic of the time and of the man. Several of these letters are about Cassiodorus himself, or addressed to him by the king.[1] If these letters were merely instructions officially directed to him about the business of his department, such as two letters from one of Theodoric's successors, Theodahad,[2] about the regulations of the market and trades, there would be nothing extraordinary in the minister himself drawing up the orders on which he was to act. But the letters referred to are much more than this. They are letters written in the king's name by Cassiodorus himself, about himself, and to himself—letters of highest commendation, full of unstinted praise of his qualities and services, and supplying us with a full and eulogistic account of his career and employments. The fashion of a man puffing himself is an old one, and is not likely in any age to become obsolete. We have heard of distinguished authors reviewing their own books, and of a popular divine announcing himself, in a communication traced to his own pen, as "the

[1] ix. 24, 25; i. 3, 4; iii. 28. It is possible that the letters in book i. and iii., addressed to Cassiodorus "*the Patrician*," may have been, as Clinton thinks, addressed to his father. He never enumerates the Patriciat among his own dignities. But those in book ix. are certainly addressed to himself.

[2] ix. 27, 28.

great and good"; but this was veiled under a modest reserve. There is no concealment about Cassiodorus. With the utmost simplicity and frankness he introduces these specimens of laboured eloquence and historical panegyric on himself, composed by himself, into the collection which he himself publishes. It is, no doubt, a trait of the man's natural vanity, which comes out with equal distinctness in the display which he everywhere makes of his literary accomplishments. But the unsuspicious openness of the self-glorification of Cassiodorus seems to belong to the time. He obviously thought there was nothing to be shy about or to be ashamed of. The habit of panegyrics, cultivated in the Roman schools and practised in the Roman assemblies, the taste for it, and the prevalent idea that this was the great use of artificial eloquence, had deadened men's sense of the becoming. Men who were vying with one another in strained and extravagant praises of others, naturally came to think that this was the natural mode of expressing their fair sense of their own claims and merits. It was the way, at which his age at least would not be shocked, of putting on record services which really were valuable and unwearied, the opinion which Theodoric had of him, and the free and confidential relations between the Gothic king and his Italian minister. But one would like to know what were Theodoric's thoughts, and perhaps comments, when Cassiodorus read over to him the letters about Cassiodorus which were to go out in the great "Barbarian's"

name. Probably most of their eloquence was lost upon him.

Gibbon, of course, sneers at Cassiodorus. He might, perhaps, have had an instinct that the palpable faults of Cassiodorus were, in exaggeration and caricature, just the faults with which his own manner of writing was reproached. But with all these faults the collection is invaluable. It is one of the most varied and lifelike pictures of the daily march of a real administration in a very dim and distant time which we possess. What would we give if Augustus or Trajan had had a Cassiodorus, a secretary who preserved his despatches and records on passing emergencies as well as on large questions of policy. The interest of some of Pliny's letters shows what the value of such records would be. And the collection of Cassiodorus refers to a very critical and important period in the history of Italy and Christendom. It was the meeting point of two great tendencies, and Theodoric's great attempt was to reconcile and harmonise them. He was not going to give up his German sympathies, his German habits of thought, the conviction that the Germans were the stronger, nobler, greater race, the national consciousness that led him to take the position of the elder brother among his wilder and less instructed and ruder brethren, the kings of the Franks, and Visigoths, and Burgundians, and Vandals, and Herules. But he saw and valued what they knew nothing about except to despise it: all that Rome had done and had won for

the good order, the peace, the growing welfare, of human life. Without giving up or imperilling the interests of his own great race, he wanted to preserve this. He did more; he wanted to make it, as far as it was useful, the possession and heritage of his people. He wanted to educate his Goths, not in Latin customs and elegancies and softnesses, but in the Latin value for law and justice, for settled life, for husbandry, for building; and ultimately he hoped, by protecting the weaker but subtler Latins without allowing them any dangerous superiority, to fuse the two races into a new nation with the old name of Roman. This was his aim and line of work, not the same, but in part coincident with that of those Italians who are represented by Cassiodorus, and of whom there were certainly not a few[1]—men who thought it best for Italy frankly and in good faith to co-operate with Theodoric in his evident efforts after conciliation, justice, and general improvement. But to them their great interest was in what had come down from the great times of the Empire. Their aim and hope was still to keep Italy Italian, and to make the Goths, as Theodoric professed, Romans. They naturally put their experience to account in carrying out Theodoric's policy, and sought

[1] See the striking account of Liberius, first under Odoacer, then under Theodoric, ii. 16: "Flexo jam pene domino [Odoacer], nullis est terroribus inclinatus; sustinuit immobilis ruinam principis sui; nec novitas illum turbare potuit, quam etiam ferocitas gentilis expavit. Probavimus hominis fidem: tristis ad jura nostra transivit."

to help him, in their own interest as much as in his. And in such a monument as the *Variæ* of Cassiodorus we see the desperate efforts of Italian nationality to save what could be saved in the wreck and confusion of the "naufraga tellus." We see in the literary colour, as well as in the political earnestness of Theodoric's minister, the agonised and convulsive grasp at the fragments of departing culture and organisation amid the destructive and unknown forces of the revolution which was running its course. Theodoric hoped to have directed and shaped it, to have controlled its fierceness, to have averted its dangers. He had the idea of a new, a revived, a united Italy. And it might have been, if what he began had been carried on. But it was not to be. He died and left anarchy in the young and unripe kingdom. Then came Belisarius and Narses. After them came the Lombards. After the Lombards came the Franks. And then the destiny of Italy during the Middle Ages was decided. There was to be no such Italy as Theodoric imagined yet.

The letters of Cassiodorus, besides the light which they throw on the public history of his time, are a storehouse of curious and authentic information on the condition of Italy and its social state; the ways of everyday life, the productions, the industries, the tastes and fashions of its people. These glimpses of real life come from Cassiodorus's very unbusiness-like and very absurd way of writing; he never can resist the temptation to tack on a description, more

or less elaborate, to a despatch or an order. Thus he has to protect the inhabitants of Como, a town which lay at the junction of many roads, from the excessive burdens required of them in the service of the posts; and to this we owe a very interesting picture of the town and lake as they appeared to him.[1] He orders a sum of money to be paid for the supply of paper to the public offices; and on this he takes the opportunity to write at large about the use and the manufacture of paper at his time.[2] It was part of his business to stock the royal cellar, and to cater for the royal buttery and cheese-room; he has to send orders to the landed gentry of Verona to provide certain wines to be purchased for the royal table,[3] to the Chancellor of Lucania to forward with all speed a supply of Brutian wine and cheese from the Calabrian Sila, of the quality which, when put before the king from his secretary's own cellars, had greatly pleased the taste of the *Rerum Dominus;* and on this we get an interesting though very irrelevant little lecture on the character of the wines then in fashion, and on the qualities which then made good cheese—its oiliness, its sweetness, its smell of aromatic herbs.[4] He writes to exempt the territory of Rhegium from the obligation of supplying so much wheat and lard; the exception is grounded on the nature of its soil, suited not to corn and pasture, but to vineyards and spade husbandry; and then we have an account of its market gardens and its choice fish. In his char-

[1] xi. 14. [2] xi. 38. [3] xii. 4. [4] xii. 12.

acter as Prætorian Præfect he writes to order the chancellor of the province to put an end to some oppressive exactions in the shape of purveyance and judicial fees, of which the people of Scyllacium—Squillace—complained;[1] and this gives him the opportunity of describing the beauty and the fine climate of the district, a region where his own patrimony was situated, and where he afterwards founded the monastic and literary retreat in which he ended his days.[2] Another letter describes the repairs necessary for the Flaminian Way[3] in an order to get the road ready for the passage of the army; another gives directions for the construction of a wooden bridge over the Tiber for the king's entry into Rome;[4] another, in an order to send wine and oil by sea from Istria, puts before us the barge navigation of the north of Italy,[5] by craft that were at once, like some of our London barges, canal boats and sea-going vessels. The correspondents of Cassiodorus must,

[1] xii. 15.

[2] The double monastery, Vivariense and Castelliense, one for cœnobites, the other for hermits, of which he has left a description (*Div. Litt.* c. 29), and where he intended that learning, both classical and theological, should find a refuge. He had attempted to found schools like those of Alexandria at Rome in conjunction with Pope Agapetus (535–536), but the wars wrecked his plans (*Div. Litt.* Præf.) Why do the articles in Dr. Smith's *Dictionaries of Biography* speak of the "Monasterium Vivariense" as "*Viviers*," as if it was in France, and not in Italy? The name answers to that of an English training college, "Fish-ponds," near Bristol.

[3] xii. 18. [4] xii. 19. [5] xii. 24.

we should suppose, have thought him the most tiresome of bores; but for us he preserves sketches of the goings on of his time, full of colour and life, which we might look for in vain elsewhere.

Cassiodorus continued in office after the death of his great master (526), and served his successors, Amalasuntha and her son, the boy-king Athalaric, her base murderer, Theodahad, and her avenger, Vitiges. Letters written in the name of Vitiges (536–540), and written apparently early in his short reign, are the last State papers which he has inserted in his collection. He probably retired about this time to his monastery near Squillace, to spend his last days in devotion and literary pursuits, in the study of Scripture, in the composition of elementary treatises, meant to be useful to the ill-educated people round him, in the multiplication of copies of books and the formation of an instructive library. He saw the overthrow of the Goths; he probably heard of the advent of the Lombards. With all his faults, he was a man who redeemed his age from the imputation of want of public spirit, of stupid and inert selfishness, of coarse ignorance. So important a collection as that of his "various" letters deserves a better and more helpful edition than we yet possess of it. If our Universities are too busy for such tasks, we must hope that the distinguished German scholars who are at work on the *Monumenta Historica Germaniæ*, who have given us such admirable specimens of their work in Waitz's *Scriptores Rerum Langobardi-*

*carum*, in the editions of *Salvian*, *Victor Vitensis*, *Eugippius*, and others, and who are preparing an edition of Jordanes, and are said to be contemplating one of the letters of Gregory the Great, will in due time take in hand the important and not very easy work of editing, as they ought to be edited, both as to text and elucidations, the letters of the Italian secretary of the greatest of early Italian kings.

# THE LETTERS OF POPE GREGORY I[1]

[April 1881]

We have called attention to the light thrown by the letters and despatches of Cassiodorus on the political and social life of Italy, in its details and daily course, when the German invaders first appeared there as masters and settlers, and the struggle began, in numberless and varied points all over the peninsula, between their customs and spirit and the strong but damaged fabric of Roman civilisation. The collection of Cassiodorus shows this, under the wise and generally benignant policy of Theodoric, and when the forces and habits which had for centuries governed life under the Empire, though for the moment surprised and shaken, had in no way lost their sway on the imagination and faith of the population. The campaigns of Belisarius and Narses seemed to show what power was still left in the Roman Empire. These great captains, with armies recruited from the steppes of Scythia and the Isaurian highlands, tore

[1] *Gregory the Great.* By the Rev. J. Barmby, B.D., Vicar of Pittington, late Principal of Bishop Hatfield Hall, Durham, and formerly Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. (London: 1879.)

the great prize of the Italian cities and provinces out of the obstinate grip of the Germans, and for a few years held it fast. But there was nothing solid in the deliverance. It was not to restore the dominion of the world to Rome and Italy, but to recover a lost jewel for the crown worn by Greeks at Constantinople. Belisarius won back the great prefecture of Italy, as he had won back the great prefecture opposite—of Africa; both of them territories necessary to a power which, like that of Constantinople, meant to command the Mediterranean. But all this was transient. That which was to be the long fate of Italy had begun. The condition of things mirrored in the letters of Cassiodorus was continued and fixed in a permanent and aggravated form under the dominion of the Lombards. Never more for centuries was she to shake off her northern masters—

Per servir sempre, o vincitrice, o vinta.

But besides the State papers of Cassiodorus there is another series, really public ones even when addressed to individuals, which is of the highest importance to the knowledge of those critical times, when the old world was slowly passing into the modern world. These are the letters of the Popes. These letters, in their genuine and in their forged form, are the foundation of the Canon Law; and to the end of the fifth century, those genuine ones which have come down to us are almost exclusively of theological or ecclesiastical interest. But from the

time of Pope Gelasius (492–496), that is, from the time of the first establishment of the northern foreigners in Italy, these letters assume a business-like character as well. They began, as a matter of course, whether or not the writer was personally a remarkable man, to be copied, as public records, into registers in the Roman Chancery (*scrinium*), and preserved in the archives of the Lateran.[1] They have been frequently made into collections with varying objects and varying completeness; they have been recently calendared with admirable care by Jaffé, Pothast, and P. Ewald; but they have yet to be fully gathered together, arranged and critically edited with due knowledge and skill. When this is done they will present a picture of the daily goings on, the daily purposes and conflicts, the daily troubles and difficulties of Italian life, as important though, perhaps, not so varied as the papers of Cassiodorus. Among these documents stands out pre-eminently the *Registrum*, or letter-book, of Gregory the Great (590–604).

A glance at this collection is sufficient to show that it was something new, in its magnitude and its variety of subjects. If any one will compare with it, in Jaffé's book, the abstracts of the letters of Leo, of Gelasius, of Vigilius, of the first and second Pelagius, some of the busiest among Gregory's predecessors, the difference will be seen. The letters are much

[1] Ewald in *Neues Archiv*, vol. v. p. 509. (*Liber Diurnus*, ed. De Rozière, pp. ix., xxv.)

fewer; and they relate mainly to the internal concerns of the Church, as a religious society. This is especially the case with the largest and most important collection, that of the letters of Pope Leo. But when we come to Gregory's *Registrum*, the theological element, though not absent, contracts itself into a much smaller space. Matters of Church government and discipline, of social morality and order, are prominent. But secular questions in great variety, such as might engage the attention of a conscientious and just landlord, a vigilant and beneficent head of a civil department, or a public-spirited and large-hearted minister, occupy even more space in it, and show how large a part the Pope was beginning to take in the political and temporal business of Italy. It is this preponderance of administrative activity which gives a character to the letters of Gregory the Great, and makes them so important in illustrating the history of his age and country. But the collection has a further interest. The history of forsaken and helpless Italy, abandoned by the Empire to which it had given birth, and, after having been for ages the flower and glory of the world, the chosen and privileged home of luxury and power, delivered over defenceless to the barbarians, to be dealt with at their insolent pleasure, is perhaps the most pathetic spectacle to be found in history of a fallen nation; and the piercing and expressive sense of this degradation thrills through every line of Gregory's letters.[1]

[1] "*We*," writes Gregory in his earliest letters, "who abroad

We see in them the evidence of one of those times of apparent chaos, when the power and hope of remedy, of repair, of resource, seem exhausted among men. But those times of chaos are only apparent; there is always something forming, organising itself, growing under them. And the special interest of Gregory's letters is that, amid the desolations of Italy and these wails of despair, in this record of lamentation and mourning and woe, they exhibit in the clearest and most instructive way the nascent Papacy of the Middle Ages: the early steps by which the Primacy of St. Leo, the head of the hierarchy of the early times, *Primus inter pares* among the great Patriarchs of the undivided Church, developed into the administrative all-controlling monarchy of Gregory VII., Innocent III., and Boniface VIII. And they show not only the steps by which it took shape and became established; they show it was a necessary and inevitable consequence of the conditions of the time.

The events of the sixth century had, on the whole, consolidated the Empire in the East. But in the West these events had broken up society, and left it to re-form itself round new centres of authority.

meet everywhere the stab of the foeman's sword, at home have to face the mutiny of our defenders;" "*you*," contrasting the position of his brother Patriarch at Constantinople, "who stand afar off from the confusion of tribulation, which we suffer in this land."—Ep. i. 3, 4. See in his *Homilies on Ezekiel*, ii. 6. 22-24, on the ruin of the "Lady of the World," "*Mundi Domina.*"

And they had left Italy, especially, the most disorganised province of the Empire. Nobody knew to whom it belonged. In Gaul, in Spain, in Africa, in Britain, there had been ruin and change; but no one doubted who was master. Not so in Italy. There had been a Teutonic kingdom in Italy, taking the place of the Latin rule. But it had passed away, and at the end of the century the "times of the Goths"[1] were only talked of with other things of the past. And now, who ruled Italy? The great Cæsar far away never ceased, of course, to claim its allegiance; but his interest in it was like the interest of the present Ottomans in Arabia and Egypt, and his hold on it was of the same kind. He had garrisons in Ravenna, in Rome, in Naples; certain formal points of etiquette towards him were exacted or kept up by custom, more or less regularly; when he could, he levied money; but the country, as a whole, was left to itself. The Lombards—so we call them for convenience, though the name was yet unknown, and the Langobardi and Lombards were as different from one another as the Franks and the French—had come down in strength, and shown their purpose to remain. They had seized a number of important cities, and went on, as opportunity offered, to threaten and attempt others. But they were balancing between a centralised kingship and their primitive arrangement of independent "dukedoms"; and they had not yet made up their minds to exchange the roving and

[1] Greg. *Dialogues*, passim; Ep. iv. 19.

buccaneering habits of a predatory horde for the settled life and ease to which their conquests invited them, but which also involved the restraints which necessarily fall on dwellers in cities. At Pavia and Monza they were beginning to build churches and palaces; meanwhile, their bands were still wandering over Italy, wasting farms, surprising towns, cutting off heads, or driving their captives in leash, "like dogs," under the walls of Rome.[1] The Exarch and his master were not strong enough to check or punish them; the Lombards were not strong enough to chase the Exarch from Ravenna, or the Latin garrison from Rome. They fixed themselves in centres of devastation at Spoleto or Benevento; not masters themselves, but allowing no one else to be master. The municipalities of Italy had long been sinking under the weight of the taxes, and now they knew that there was no government to care for them or protect them. Where they were not ruined they yielded more and more to that tendency to isolation, which has ever since been so marked a feature in Italian civil life. There was nothing to bind them to a common country, where the representatives of the central authority came only to fleece and oppress them. Crowds of proprietors and town councillors pressed into the clergy or into the monasteries, not from love of a religious life, but to escape the re-

[1] See Ep. ii. 46 (a. 592); Ep. v. 40 (595): "Ita ut oculis meis cernerem Romanos more canum in collis funibus ligatos, qui ad Franciam ducebantur venales."

sponsibilities of citizens; and order after order had to be issued by the authorities, both of the Church and of the State, that such candidates were to be rigorously excluded, unless it was quite clear that their impoverished and burdened fellow-citizens had no claim on them, either in respect of the obligations of office, or their share of the public taxes. Rome itself was as much perplexed as the rest of Italy as to whom it belonged: whether the feeble and often mutinous garrison which the Emperor kept there meant that he cared little about maintaining it in its old dignity; whether the presence of an imperial officer, and the infrequent and chiefly complimentary communications which passed between the old and new Rome, signified anything more than the unwillingness of a court to give up nominal claims; whether the withdrawal of all substantial honours and substantial assistance did not leave Rome free to think exclusively of its own interests; whether it was worth while, or whether the Emperor had any right, to keep up any tie at all between Rome and a distant and alien government, a government in the hands of despised and detested Greeks. Rome, with its immense pretensions and wonderful memories, could neither yield to the Lombard, nor keep him at bay, nor render any cheerful and honest allegiance to Cæsars who had despoiled her of that by which alone the Cæsars had become great.

Constantine's policy has been extolled for its wisdom in transplanting the seat of empire from the

Tiber to the Bosporus. Byzantium, in such an empire as that of the Cæsars had become, was more central than Rome; and for commerce, for defence, for the beauty and magnificence of a capital, it was as much above the old seat of the Republic, as it was more convenient for the transaction of business, for administration, government, and conquest. Rome was an accidental site; no one would have chosen it as a capital for its own sake among the cities of Italy. Constantinople was one deliberately selected by a far-sighted wisdom, out of all that the Empire had to offer. But Constantine made one oversight; at least he made one mistake, and it was to the objects of his policy and the unity of the Empire a fatal one. He forgot, when he transferred the throne of Augustus to Byzantium, that he left behind him at Rome, consecrated and justified by the matchless history of a thousand years, jealousies which were unappeasable, and hatreds that nothing could wear out. When he erected a new capital he ought to have destroyed the old one, and passed the ploughshare over it, as Totila the Goth meant to do. In those days it would not have been impossible if he had had the courage. "Like Thebes, or Babylon, or Carthage," writes Gibbon, "the name of Rome might have been erased from the earth, if the city had not been animated by a vital principle, which again restored her to honour and dominion." But the sanctity of Christian Rome was not greater than that of Jerusalem, and Constantinople had been made to take precedence of

Jerusalem; and Constantine, if he were to perfect his work, should have given to the population of Rome, to its nobility, to its clergy, new homes and new interests, and left its ruins to the advancing fevers of the Campagna. At the beginning of the fourth century, even the Bishop of Rome would hardly have been an insuperable obstacle to the completeness of the change. Whether the world would have been a gainer by such a unity of empire is another question, and one on which it is idle to speculate. But it is as certain as anything can be, that by leaving Rome standing, in its decayed majesty and unabated pretensions, Constantine made inevitable one great calamity of European history, the disruption and the antipathies of East and West; and by leaving on the spot, as the sole representative of those Imperial ideas and claims which never died at Rome, one who could invest them with a new and diviner sanctity, he also made inevitable the position, the pretensions, and the theocratic monarchy, of the Popes.

For in the misery and confusion to which Italy had been abandoned, the one survival of purpose and governing capacity was in the Roman Church. Great by the necessities of the case; great by religious tradition; great by political position; great by the divisions of the Church, which needed an arbiter, and sought the most highly placed; great by increasing pretensions readily made and readily or lightly allowed; great equally in the name of the Apostles and of the Cæsars, the Roman Church, amid all the

accumulations of misfortune which fell on the city, only grew stronger and greater by the destruction of every rival authority within it. In this way the discrownment of the "Lady of Kingdoms," in favour of her eastern rival, had saved the Roman Church. In this way the ravages of Alaric and Genseric had rendered more conspicuous the strength of that institution which ruled with undiminished loftiness amid the tremendous ruin which they had made. The temper, the obstinacy, the "high stomach" of the old senate had passed into the clergy who surrounded the Roman Patriarch at the Lateran, or before the tombs of the Apostles. With the exception of St. Leo, the early Popes have not much distinctness of personal character; but they were the heads, the representatives, the organs of a body which had inherited and sedulously cherished all that was left of Roman firmness, of Roman sense of dignity, and of Roman traditions of policy and action. They kept it all, undismayed and unflinching, till the evil day came when, except among them, Roman strength, Roman organisation, Roman tenacity had perished. Then, among these ecclesiastics and their chiefs, and these only, were to be found an intelligent estimate of the difficulties of the time, a clear perception and steady pursuit of objects and aims, the unshaken faith in a great cause, courage, counsel, sympathy, public spirit; allegiance, always professed, and often really paid, through all disappointments, to justice and purity; the conviction that in the end, though perhaps not

here, right must triumph, and wrong meet its reward. In a blind and fainting world, given over to violence, and cut loose from all order and law, *immensa mortalitatis vastitas*,[1] we can hardly imagine now what it must have been to have had such a stay to lean upon, such a refuge to fly to for comfort, protection, guidance. It is not wonderful that the claims of the Roman Church to govern men were magnified. It is not wonderful that they were allowed. For who was there to do it better?

And when all this came to be represented, not by average men, but by one in whom all its characteristic features were embodied in a high degree, the effect, not merely at the moment, but permanently, was greatly increased. And this was what happened when Gregory became Pope. In the public history of the time, as a man in high place, he stands in the sharpest contrast to every one round him. And he stands in almost as sharp a contrast to almost all his predecessors. We know a great deal more about him than about most of them; but the reason probably is that he did more, and there was more to preserve about him.

Of this remarkable person we do not pretend in this paper to give an account. Besides being a Pope and a public man, he was a theologian and a Church reformer, to whose influence and to whose ideas the public worship of the West owes in a great degree its forms, its language, and its music. He leads the

[1] Ep. xiii. 42.

van of the writers and doctors of the Middle Age. There is a great gulf between him and St. Augustine; but he was next to St. Augustine as its teacher. His works, the *Dialogues*, the *Moralia on Job*, the *Homilies on Ezekiel*, the *Rule of the Pastoral Care*, stand second in mediæval libraries only to the works of St. Augustine. But of all this we shall say nothing. In truth, an adequate book on Gregory the Great, to whom England and the English race owe so much, would fill an obvious void in our literature. Mr. Barmby, in his little volume recently published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, tells the story with care and feeling. The chapter about him in Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity* is picturesque and comprehensive. There is a more elaborate work in German by Lau.[1] But the whole subject, in its various relations, is still an open one. The edition of Gregory's *Registrum*, promised by the editors of the new series of the *Monumenta Germaniæ*,[2] may, when it appears, tempt some scholar to undertake the task.

Gregory, above all things, was a Roman of the Romans. His family was noble and rich, and counted a Pope among its members two or three generations back. He had grown up with the belief that the world had never produced any race of men equal to Romans; that, in spite of all their crimes and all their degradation, they still remained the first and noblest

[1] *Gregor. I. der Grosse.* G. J. T. Lau; Leips. 1845. See also Hegel, *Städteverfassung von Italien*, I. ii. 1.

[2] *Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum.* Hannover. 1878, p. 524

people on the earth; they were the deposed lords of mankind, justly abiding their punishment, but none the less high above the instruments of their chastisement, the barbarians and slaves who had risen in rebellion against them, in their sense of what was worthy of men, and in their capacity to rule men. Churchman as he is, the first and greatest of his order, yet the old proud word of Rome, which even in the style of this time had survived imperialism, *Respublica*, name and thing, the sum of secular interests, with all their associations and all their duties, is as often in his mouth as it was in the mouth of Cicero; as it might have been in the mouth of a statesman, if there had been one in the West equal to the emergency. The Greeks he hated and scorned. He disdained to learn their language, though it must have been as common in Rome as French is in London, and though the greatest and most venerable portion of Christian literature was Greek. He acquitted himself with becoming dignity and self-respect, when he had to be civil to the great authorities of the Empire, who were Greek; but national antipathy edged his dislike and his sarcasm when he found himself in controversy with a Patriarch of Constantinople, or protesting against an Imperial edict. As for the German "long-bearded" barbarians, the Lombards (as we call them by anticipation, for Gregory knew not the softened name), the faithless ruffians who lorded it over a superior race, he felt nothing but indignant loathing. It was a popular belief, alluded to in Popes' letters

long after Gregory, that the Lombards were physically unclean and offensive; they certainly were so to all his moral instincts; they stank in his nostrils. Yet the barbarians, in their own land and at a distance, excited his interest, his compassion, his desire to be their benefactor, lawgiver, and apostle. Gregory is the one Pope of that time who shows the old Roman yearning for new realms to subject to the rule and order of Rome. It was good for the world that the limit of barbarism should be narrowed, and glorious for the Master whom he served; and he sent forth Augustine and Mellitus to Britain, as the Cæsars sent forth Suetonius and Agricola. There is no one who can with such justice be said to have been *Ultimus Romanorum*. He was one of the old stock by blood, by character, by his faults and his greatness; and no one of the same type and combination of qualities appears after him.

He was a man of his time. His sincere and fervent religion was deeply affected by the superstitions of his age. He was easily credulous of miracles, and encouraged credulity round him. He believed that there was virtue in filings from the Apostles' chains, and bits of rag which had been passed over their tombs; and he sent such things as presents to distinguished officers and barbarian kings.[1] It is to be feared that he was not always scrupulous in the means which he took to make others believe what he himself believed, and held to be most important and

[1] Paul. Diac., *Vit. Greg.* c. 24; Ep. i. 30; iii. 33.

sacred. If the stories told by his biographers are true,[1] he must sometimes have stooped to a conjurer's trick to convince a gainsayer. He was, as was to be expected, peremptory and stern in discipline; he was sometimes severe and harsh. He was certainly severe and unsparing to himself. During the whole of his active life, he was never free from bodily suffering, brought on probably by his austerities; unable from pain to stand or to sit, he transacted business, dictated his letters, composed his religious treatises, and gave his instructions in music, condemned by his infirmities to the confinement of his couch.[2] Years after his death they still showed in the Lateran palace the bed on which he used to lie while giving his lessons in chanting to his choir school, and the whip (*flagellum*) with which "he used to threaten his boys" during the practice.[3] The example of St. Benedict, the great reformer of religious life in Italy in the sixth century, had profoundly impressed him. In contrast with the contemplative asceticism of the East, and beyond mere passive privations of appetite, Benedict of Nursia had introduced into his model of Christian perfection, as a primary and indispensable obligation, the characteristic idea of severe manual labour, chiefly in connection with the soil. It was a familiar idea to one belonging to the labouring population of central Italy, the

[1] Paul. Diac. c. 23.

[2] Paul. Diac. c. 15; and his letters, *passim*.

[3] Joan. Diac. ii. 6 (882). "Sein Wille war stark genug, eine ganze Welt vom Krankenbette aus zu regieren."—Hegel, i. 164; *vide* Ep. ix. 123.

descendants of the toil-hardened Sabine and Marsian farmers. It gave a thoroughly Latin colour and direction to monasticism, and long determined its course in the West; and to Gregory, as to many of his contemporaries, it made the monastic profession a new reality, both in its form of self-denial, and in its habits of practical utility and indefatigable labour.

He was a Roman in his sternness and determination, but he was an Italian in his tenderness, and he was also an Italian in his humour. His letters break out continually into a burst of grave playfulness, as of a man who, suffering himself, and with much suffering round him, could not help being amused by what was grotesque and odd among the serious things with which he had to deal. His famous string of puns, about the English slaves, one following another as they do in a punster's happy moment, is connected with one of his most eventful resolutions, the mission to England. He mingled his very southern exuberance of complaint, in moments of distress and anxiety, and the Scriptural phrases in which, after the fashion of the time, he expressed it, with rough jokes against himself. "Behold," he writes to the Emperor's sister, lamenting his change of life and occupations when he was made Pope, "behold, the Most Serene Lord, the Emperor, has bidden a monkey to become a lion. He may order the monkey to be called a lion, but even his orders cannot make him one."[1] So he writes to a friend on the same occasion: "It is all very well

[1] Ep. i. 5.

to make the name the likeness of the thing, and to turn neat sentences and pretty speeches in your letters, and to call a monkey a lion; but it is just the same thing as we do when we call mangy puppies pards or tigers."[1] The vein of pleasantry, generally in the form of objurgation, which comes out in his letters, is something of the same kind as the humour of Pio Nono, and, like his, is sometimes savage. His favourite, Peter the sub-deacon, his agent in Sicily and the manager of the great Church estates, trusted as he was, does not come off without an occasional touch of his master's sarcasm.[2] "I am very much obliged to your solicitude about the order which I gave you to retransmit my brother's money, and which you have as entirely committed to oblivion as if it had been something said about the meanest of your own slaves. Now, at any rate, will—I cannot say your *Experience*, but—your *Negligence* be good enough to fulfil it." In another long letter of separate directions, Peter is reminded, partly in jest and a good deal in earnest, of his duties:—

I hear from Abbot Marinianus that the building in the Prætorian Monastery is not yet half done: what shall I say to this, but extol the ardour of your Experience? I hear, too, that you are quite aware that certain property and several farms really belong to other people, but that through the representations or the fear of some one or other you are afraid to restore them. If you were really a Christian, you would fear God's judgment more than men's tattle. Now, mind what I say, for I am always

[1] Ep. i. 6.

[2] Ep. i. 44.

telling you about this. . . . Further, you have sent me a wretched hack, and five good donkeys. The hack I cannot ride, he is such a brute ; and the animals that are good I cannot mount, because they are donkeys. So if you wish to make me content, be so good as to send me something more suitable.[1]

His humour and his way of rallying his friends when not quite satisfied with them pass sometimes into half-conscious irony, and deepen into sarcasm when he was vexed or irritated. There was an easy-going bishop of Salona, Natalis, towards whom Gregory felt kindly, though he disapproved of his ways and had rebuked him.[2] The bishop excused himself. He was charged with being too fond of conviviality; but had not Abraham made a feast and received angels, and had not Isaac enjoyed his venison before he blessed his son? Feasts promoted kindness and charity, and St. Paul had said, "Let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth." It was true he was not a reader, but his "tribulations" left him no time. Gregory's grave letter in answer is inimitable. He accepts the argument as all serious, and solemnly points out that if Natalis *had* received angels, there was nothing more to be said; that as to Isaac's venison, it had an allegorical meaning, and that *if* the good things which Natalis enjoyed were, according to this meaning, the study of the Divine Scriptures, then Gregory could not blame his love of good cheer. So feasts promoted charity, if people did not backbite and laugh at their absent neighbours in them, and

[1] Ep. ii. 32. [2] Ep. ii. 52.

gossip about worldly trifles: "if this is your way in your feasts, I own that you are masters for those who fast." And in the same strain he goes on at length, "answering the fool according to his folly." But there are occasions when his irony becomes fierce. This was especially provoked by his great brother at Constantinople, John the Faster. "Did he carry his abstinence so far," he asks in one of these letters, "as to feel bound to abstain even from telling the truth?"[1] It is curious to read in the mouth of a Roman Pontiff, himself a monk and an ascetic, sarcasms against the

[1] "Gregory to John, Bishop of Constantinople.—The subject itself is a reason for writing, but charity moves me besides; for I have written once and again to my most holy brother, Lord John, and have not had his answer. Some secular person or other addressed me in his name; but if they were his letters, I was not awake, for what I found in them was something very different from what I believed of him. For I had written about the most reverend John the Priest, and about the question of the Isaurian monks, one of whom, himself a priest, had been beaten with rods in your Church; and the answer came back, in the name of your most holy Fraternity, that you knew not what I was writing about. I was amazed and puzzled at this answer, for I thought to myself, if he speaks the truth, what can be worse than that such things should be done, and that he who is on the spot should not know of them? What can be the shepherd's excuse if the wolf eats the sheep and the shepherd not know it? But if your holiness knew of it, and why I wrote, and answered, 'I do not know,' what shall I reply on my part, seeing the Scripture saith, 'the mouth which lieth, slayeth the soul'? I beseech you, most holy brother, has that abstinence of yours, which is so great, come to this point, that you would deny and hide to your brother what you know to be the case? Would it not have been better that flesh should have entered into that mouth to be eaten, than that out of it should have

alleged show of asceticism, as bitter and truculent as those with which we are familiar in the Puritan controversialists.[1]

Gregory, in truth, was an old-fashioned Roman in his deep dislike of anything Greek. He felt towards all Greeks and all that belonged to them as Juvenal did; as Englishmen of the last century felt towards everything French. The brutality of the barbarians shocked and alarmed as well as disgusted him, but he had the feeling of superior strength in the mingled contempt and loathing which he felt for the "impostures" of the Greeks. "Nothing in any of the Pope's family," says his biographer, "from the least to the greatest, showed barbarian ways, either in speech or dress; but the genuine Latin spirit, in *toga* or *trabea*

come the untrue word to deceive a neighbour. . . . But God forbid that I should think anything of the sort of your most holy heart. The letter had your name prefixed, but I do not think it was yours. I wrote to the most blessed man, Lord John, but I believe the answer came from some young fellow of your household, who has learned nothing yet of God, who knows nothing of the bowels of love, who is accused on all hands of shameful crimes and of forging wills, who fears not God, nor regards man."—Ep. iii. 53.

[1] For instance, in a letter to the Emperor—"Dum nos (the clergy) competentia nobis relinquimus, et nobis incompetentia cogitamus, peccata nostra barbaricis viribus sociamus, et culpa nostra hostium gladios exacuit, quæ R. P. vires gravat. Quid autem dicturi sumus . . . qui quod per linguam prædicamus, per exempla destruimus? Ossa jejuniis atteruntur, et mente turgemus. Corpus despectis vestibus tegitur, et elatione cordis purpuram superamus. Jacemus in cinere, et excelsa despicimus. Doctores humilium, duces superbiæ, ovina facie lupinos dentes abscondimus."—Ep. v. 20.

(the dress of consuls or knights), after the old Roman fashion, occupied its own Latium in the very Latial palace." But he goes on to add, after saying how philosophy and wisdom abounded in the palace, that "the only thing wanting was the interpreter's knowledge of two languages, the Cecropian maiden having of late given herself to the task of defending juggling frauds."[1] His letters curiously bear out the statement. He seems rather to pride himself on his ignorance of Greek; he does not want to know it."[2] He never heard of so famous a heretic as Eudoxius, because he could not find him in Philastrius and Augustine, and the Latin translation of Epiphanius.[3] He knew nothing of the Greek Church historians, and would have nothing to do with them; and learnt at last to his surprise from the Bishop of Alexandria who Eudoxius was, against whom the mighty Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus had written, "against whom our heroes have cast so many darts."[4] He accuses Greek monks of forging false relics.[5] He would not answer a lady's letter "because, being a Latin, she had written to him in Greek."[6] He questions Greek references to the council of Ephesus, and will not trust their copies.[7] "The Roman editions (*codices*) are much more faithful than the Greek ones; for" (he is writing to a Greek friend), "we have not your wit, but neither

[1] Jo. Diac. ii. 13, 14. He had no one at C. P. to translate from Latin into Greek.—Ep. vi. 30.

[2] Ep. vii. 32. [3] Ep. vii. 4, 34. [4] Ep. viii. 30.

[5] Ep. iv. 30. [6] Ep. iv. 32. [7] Ep. vi. 14.

have we your cheating tricks (*imposturas*)." It is clear how great was the Latin ignorance about the questions debated in the East; how limited was the Latin power to master them; and how great the confusion, the jealous animosities, and the misunderstandings caused by this loss of hold on Greek language and thought.

Gregory was a man of the time, as we all are; but what is more distinctive, is that he was also eminently a man above his time. In days of lawless violence, his governing and inspiring idea was the idea of justice. Like St. Ambrose, he had been a Roman magistrate;[1] and he carried the point of honour set by the best class of Roman magistrates, as to integrity and justice, into his office of Christian bishop. In his government of the Church, his leading purpose was to put down corruption, to take care that all its officers did their duty, to maintain serious discipline both in life and function, to keep before men's minds the reasons why they were religious. In the special colour and character of his policy, he was far above the temptation to splendour and show, so often felt in high places, and nowhere more than in his. With a full sense of the greatness of his place and duty, he hated ostentation in others, and shrank from it himself. The points on which he insisted and set his heart were points of practical usefulness: keeping churches and buildings in repair instead of erecting new and grand ones;[2] regulating and establishing the

[1] He had been *Prætor urbanus*.—Ep. iv. 2.

[2] "Qui omni vitæ suæ tempore sicut novas basilicas minime

service, the order, the music of the public worship of the Church; setting on foot a difficult and serious mission, like Augustine's to England. Further, he was the one patriot in Italy: the one man, in a conspicuous position, who took a true measure of the calamities and dishonour of his native land, and whose heart was pierced by them; the one man who was continually divided between pity and indignation towards men and lowly resignation beneath the scourge of God, at the thought that Italy should no longer belong to the Italians; the one man who, in the utter absence of any human hope, tried to make the best of a condition which he felt to be miserable, and who, as God had denied deliverance, sought with all his might, for the sake of his suffering countrymen, to win over the barbarian oppressors to counsels and habits of peace. His *Registrum* furnishes a store of curious and interesting illustrations of these points. We propose to give some specimens.

The Roman Church, when Gregory became Pope, had become the proprietor of a great "Patrimony." Its head was the landlord of vast estates on the mainland, in Gaul, and especially in fertile, and for the present well-guarded, Sicily; and the revenues of these estates, particularly of the corn-growing farms of Sicily, fed a large portion of the population of impoverished Rome.[1] The property was managed by

fabricarat, ita nimirum fabricatarum veterum sarta tecta cum summo studio annualiter reparabat."—Joan. Diac. iv. 68; cf. ii. 1, and Paul. Diac. c. 16.

[1] *Vide* Hegel, *Städteverfassung von Italien*, i. 162, 163.

local agents, and by semi-ecclesiastical officers, *sub-deacons* sent from Rome; and the *massæ* or farms, with the tenants and labourers attached to them, were leased to farmers (*conductores*), who were responsible for the rents in money or kind. In a disorganised time like the sixth century, it may be imagined how fraud and wrong had it their own way among the poor tenants of a distant absentee landlord; and how in this case fraud and wrong were veiled under the pretence of the interests of the Church. Gregory's Roman love of justice, and Christian sympathy for the poor, rose up together against these abuses. He at once set to work to check and correct them. Among his first orders were peremptory instructions to the manager of the Sicilian estates, Peter the sub-deacon, to look into the whole subject, to give up all unjust claims and profits on behalf of the Church, and to insist on justice everywhere.[1]

The letter of instructions which I sent you when you were proceeding to Sicily is to be repeatedly consulted by you, so that the greatest care may be taken that the Bishops do not interfere in secular matters, except so far as they are obliged to do so in order to protect the poor. But, as to the instructions in the letter about monks and clerics, I think that for the present things had best be let alone; only in attending to this, your Experience will remember to carry out as much as can be fulfilled of what you know to be my wish. Further, it has come to my knowledge, that for the ten years, from the time of Antoninus the Defensor up to now, many persons have suffered wrong from the Roman Church, so

[1] Ep. i. 36.

that people publicly complain that their boundaries have been invaded by violence,[1] their slaves carried off, even their movable goods seized by mere force without any judicial process. All this requires the earnest watchfulness of your Experience. Whatever you may find to have been during this ten years taken away by violence, or in the name of the Church unjustly withheld, this is, by the authority of my present order, to be restored to the person to whom you may ascertain that it belongs; so that the injured person may not be compelled to come to me, and to undertake the labour of so long a journey; while besides, I here have no means of sifting the truth of his statement. Placing, therefore, before your mind the majesty of the coming Judgment, restore everything that has been sinfully taken away, and be sure that you are winning for me great gain, if you gather for me a reward rather than a rich income. Many persons also, I know, complain of the loss of their slaves. They say, that if any one's slave has run away from his master and declared himself to belong to the Church, the rulers of the Church at once have kept him as belonging to the Church, without reference to the law-courts, but maintaining by force the slave's allegation. This is as displeasing to me as it is abhorrent to the judgment of truth. I therefore will that your Experience, without allowing any delay, set right whatever you find to have thus happened; and any such slaves, who are now held as the property of the Church, as they have been taken without legal process, so are to be restored before any legal process; so that if Holy Church has any legal rights in them, those who hold them in possession may be ousted by a regular proceeding of law. All these matters set right without flinching; you will then be a true soldier of St. Peter, if in his causes you keep firm hold of the truth, without any favour to him. Further, if you see that anything may justly be held to belong to the Church, take care that

[1] See particular instances, Ep. i. 9, 55, 65, 73; iii. 44.

you never assert your claim by force, especially because I have established an order, under pain of anathema,[1] that summary seizure is never to be made by our Church of any town or country estate; but whatever by reason belongs to the poor, by reason is to be claimed; lest while a good thing is done in a way which is not good, that which God justly demands of us be charged with injustice. As to the laity of rank and the governor, I beg that you will make them love you for your humility, rather than fear you for your haughtiness. But yet if you know that they are guilty of any injustice against any of the poor, you will at once change your humility into firmness, so that as long as they act well you may help them, and when they do wrong you may be their opponent. But so act that your humility may never be grovelling, nor your authority overbearing; but let rectitude give a flavour to your humility, and humility make rectitude itself courteous.

But in a subsequent letter[2] these general directions are expanded into most curious details. He sends to his agent, Peter the sub-deacon, a regular Land Law for the management of the Church estates in Sicily. It is a picture full of life and reality, of the conditions under which land was held and tilled at the time, the obligations of the tenant, the arbitrary

[1] Compare the *Acts of the Roman Council*, 595; in St. Greg. *Opp.*, vol. ii. 1289.

[2] Ep. i. 44. In Ep. ii. 32 is another business-like set of directions to his agent, Peter the sub-deacon. He is to restore some land; to favour Jewish dwellers on the farms who wish to become Christian; to get rid of useless cattle; to diminish the stock of mares (*quas valde inutiliter habemus*), keeping only a few for the benefit of the farmers, and to sell the rest; to set the herdsmen, who have cost more than they brought in, on agricultural work, etc.

exactions and the burdensome and unjust customs which were continually creeping into permanent use, the claims of farmers and their families to fixity of tenure, their liabilities and their right to protection from their landlord. The document is much too long to quote, and would require, besides, a legal commentary. But a few specimens may be inserted to show how the great landlord at Rome went into the *minutiæ* of the business of his Sicilian estate with his agent, and with what determined and earnest justice he set himself to guard his tenants from the unfairness and oppression of his officers, and their constant tendency towards fees and pickings for themselves. Thus, the rent of the Church estates in Sicily, like that of the land generally in the island, consisted partly in cargoes of corn, furnished by the tenants, the *rustici ecclesiæ*, to the agent, and shipped by him to Rome at the peril of the tenants; partly, in equivalent money payments. But the tenants, Gregory writes, had been hardly dealt with and burdened in the assessment of these rents. Accordingly, he peremptorily orders that the assessment is henceforth to depend on the public market price of wheat. He further orders that, in case of shipwreck, the loss, if reasonable care had been taken, shall not fall on the tenant, or oblige him to furnish another shipload; that the tenants should not be compelled, as they had been unfairly and unrighteously, to deliver the corn in a larger bushel than was used to measure it in the warehouses of the Church, or

to reckon a larger number of parts (*sextarii*) to the bushel than the legal and nominal number; and he fixes definitely the measure of the bushel to be used. The gains and perquisites of agents and middlemen were thus cut off. The tenants, further, of some of the Church farms were vexed and worried by various kinds of small customary surcharges and additions to their legal payments, doubtless for the benefit of some collector or official. Fixed charges had a customary percentage added to them; the pound weight was reckoned to be the pound and something more; the customary market dues gradually kept on swelling. Doubtless it was the regular course of things in a disordered state of society; and Sicily, from the days of Verres, had been fertile in abuses of this kind. But they moved Gregory's indignation. These surcharges, he writes, are most unjust; all the more if they have been customary for many years. "We utterly detest the whole thing, and we desire that it may be put an end to in our patrimony." He bids his agent make a fair estimate of what the *rustici* ought to pay, and to consolidate it into one payment.

"And lest after my death," he adds, "the surcharges which we have put an end to, and have included in the total amount of payment, should be again imposed, and both the main payment be increased, and also the tenant compelled to pay extra charges, we desire that you draw up certificates of security respecting these payments, according as you impose them, saying how much each man is to pay, cutting off market dues and extra charges

and corn fees ; and the profit from these petty payments, which used to come to the governor's profit, we desire henceforth to be a deduction, to be applied to your use, from the whole sum which you have to remit to us."

Another frequent cause of oppression under all loose governments is noticed and redressed as follows. Speaking of some form of land tax (*burdatio*), paid in three instalments in the year, he says :[1]—

> We have learned that the first instalment presses very hard on our tenants (*rusticos*) ; for before they are able to sell their produce, they have to discharge the tax ; and as they have no means of their own, they are forced to borrow from money-lenders, and have to pay heavy interest on the loan : by which they are involved in ruinous expense. Therefore we order that what they would have to borrow for this purpose from outsiders may be openly advanced to them by you, and be received back from the tenants by degrees as they realise their produce ; so that they may not be driven hard for time, and be forced to sell at a lower price what would have been quite sufficient at its proper price for their contributions.

He makes stringent regulations against unjust weights and measures in receiving the tenants' payments. "Break them, wherever you find them," he writes ; for Peter's predecessor had thought that he was not at liberty to destroy them. He forbids anything to be exacted from the tenant except according to just weight. He forbids his officers to receive anything except cheap and trifling gifts of food. He forbids excessive fees for marriages, and limits the

[1] Cf. Ep. v. 8 ; and see Hegel, i. 198, and Ducange.

amount; and they are to go to the farmer and not to the Church. He forbids the practice of claiming a Church farm back for the Church on the death of the farmer: his relations are to be allowed to succeed without loss; and if his children are under age, trustees are to be appointed for their benefit. Fees of all kinds are to be discouraged; where there is a fair reason for them, they are at any rate not to come into the accounts of the Church: "for we will not that the purse of the Church be defiled by discreditable gains." If a farmer (*conductor*) has taken something unjustly from a tenant (*colonus*), and been compelled to give up his unjust gain, this is to be restored to the tenant, and not to go to the Church: "it is not to be turned to our use, lest we ourselves be abettors of violence." And his agent is to take great care that premiums are not to be taken from farmers for letting farms, lest the temptation be given to a frequent change of farmers, in order to get fresh premiums: "the result of which change will be that the Church farms will never be cultivated." The expenses of leases are to be checked. The agent is to receive from the Church farms no more than is customary for his own grange and cellar; and any purchases which he may have to make are to be made from outsiders, not from the Church tenants.

This is but a small part of the document, which proceeds to go into special cases of hardship or difficulty, dealing with all in the same spirit of moderation, equity and good sense, and with the same earnest

wish to protect the weak, and to make fair allowance for all claims. And he thus concludes :—

All these directions you are carefully to read over and over again : put aside all that easy-going slackness which is in your character. The instructions which I have sent to the tenants (*rusticos*) are to be carefully read out through all the farms, that they may know in what points they are to defend themselves against wrong by our authority ; and let the originals or copies be given them. Take care that you keep every point unimpaired ; for in giving these directions for upholding justice I free myself from responsibility, and you, if you neglect them, incur it. Think of the terrible Judge who is coming, and let your conscience tremble at His advent, lest it fear in vain then, when before Him heaven and earth shall tremble. You have heard what I wish. See to what you do.

These instructions were among the early acts of his pontificate ; they were sent almost immediately on his coming into his office. They were not a mere burst of hasty zeal, which cooled with time. Almost at the end of his reign, we have the following letter to his agent [1] at Syracuse :—

Your Experience remembers what and what sort of an oath you took at the sacred body of the blessed Apostle Peter. Relying on it, we have committed to you the matter in dispute to be inquired into in his patrimony at Syracuse. You must therefore have always before your eyes your promise, and the fear of St. Peter, and so act, that neither by men in this life, nor by Almighty God in the last judgment, you may be rebuked.

By the information of Salerius, our secretary, we

[1] Ep. xiii. 34 (a. 603).

learn that you have found the bushel by which the Church tenants were obliged to furnish corn was one of 25 *sextarii*.[1] This we felt at once to be detestable; and we are sorry that you should have waited to make it a matter of discussion. As, however, you say that you destroyed this bushel, and made a just one, we are glad. But the secretary took pains to point out to us the amount which, by the frauds of the farmers, has been collected in the hands of your Experience. Satisfied, therefore, as we are at your careful destruction of the unjust measure, because we look forward to the future, we must also think about the evil doings which are past, lest, if what the farmers have fraudulently taken from the tenants reach us, the sins of which they are guilty be also laid to our account. We desire therefore that with all good faith and honesty, remembering the fear of Almighty God, and the bond laid on you by the blessed Apostle Peter, you make a list in each farm of the poor and needy; then, that out of the moneys found to be fraudulently taken, you buy cows, sheep, and pigs, and distribute them to each of the poor labourers. This we desire you do in concert with Bishop John and Hadrian, our secretary and official; and if it be necessary, you may call into counsel Julian, so that no one else know it; but let the business be secret. You three arrange among yourselves whether the same allowance shall be given to these same poor peasants in money or in goods. . . . I, in the words of the Master of the nations, "have all and abound;" I seek not riches, but reward. Give, therefore, to all, that out of the opportunity of reward entrusted to you, you may in the day of judgment show me the profit you have made; which if you do, honestly, faithfully, heartily, you will here receive it in your children, and afterwards you will have full recompense when the Eternal Judge comes to try us.

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[1] The old normal number was 16. It had been increased by usage. Gregory (Ep. i. 44) had limited it to 18.

The cruelties and frauds of the fiscal system which had been grinding down the labouring population of the Empire for more than two centuries are familiar to readers of history. It is plain from Gregory's letters that the condition of the Church tenants was often nearly as bad. They suffered under the usual iniquities of middlemen and contractors, and the selfishness and greediness of agents, responsible only to a distant and perhaps indifferent master. They were cheated in assessment and in measure. They were subjected to all kinds of vexatious fees, and dues and extra charges. With no capital or ready money, they had to struggle with usurious debts and mortgages. They were liable to be called upon to pay twice or thrice over what had been already received by a peculating official. It was their ordinary lot, and the best they could hope for was to be fleeced as mercifully as might be. Gregory had the originality and independence of mind to see that all this, customary as it had become, was unjust, wicked, abominable in the sight of the Eternal Judge, and he acted on his conviction with resolution and persistence. It is something in those times to see a man avow his belief in justice, and to make a systematic effort to carry real justice into the details of business, and, if necessary, against interests that were otherwise dear to him; for the produce of the Sicilian estates was the revenue of the Church, and the food of the poor of Rome.

And at Rome his justice and his liberality were not

without their detractors.[1] They murmured at him as "a spendthrift and a squanderer of the manifold treasure of the patriarchate." A curious story gained currency. It was said that a terrible famine fell on the city in the year of his death; his enemies raised the cry of his waste and dilapidations of the Church patrimony, and the mob were with difficulty prevented from venting their rage against him by burning his books. Some of them perished, and the rest were saved by the courage of his friend, Peter the Deacon, the same who was the interlocutor in his *Dialogues*. Peter represented that it was useless to try and exterminate books which had circulated all over the world, and it was, further, a monstrous sacrilege. For, the strange legend went on to say, Peter declared on oath that the Holy Spirit had often in the shape of a dove rested on his master's head while he was composing; and he offered this warrant of his truth, that the sign of his veracity should be his own immediate death, and that if he survived he would himself burn the books. Accordingly, with the Gospel in his hand, he ascended the pulpit; he gave his witness to Gregory's sanctity, and then he expired.

The enforcement of justice and care for the poor and helpless in the large and increasing patrimony of the Roman Church was in itself a task of some magnitude. But in a time of the abeyance of all the ordinary functions of Government in Italy, the business which fell to the share of a willing protector

[1] Joan. Diac. iv. 69.

of the oppressed, and an enthusiast in the cause of right like Gregory, was much more than this. With no one else to turn to for advice or help, men naturally turned to so conspicuous a person, one who would not shrink from the burdens of his position. The bulk of the large collection of the letters of his thirteen years of rule consists of directions or advice on cases submitted to him, and calling for his interference. They are, of course, largely ecclesiastical; but they are also very numerous in the sphere of what he still calls the *Respublica*, the civil and social interests of the population of the Western Empire, especially Italy. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that he was the volunteer and unofficial Secretary of State for the Government at Constantinople in those western parts, now so loosely and precariously connected with it. All central control was lost, and official greed and wrong had their fling, and were as merciless and desolating as the barbarians. He classes together, as the two great evils of his time, the sword of the Lombards and the oppression of the provincials by the "perversity," the "iniquity," of the State officers, judges, and collectors of taxes.[1] These persons paid for their offices, and excused their exactions by the necessity of recouping themselves. Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily were driven to despair by the cruelty of the imperial officers; the landed proprietors of Corsica fled to the Lombards (*nefandissima gens*), or sold their children, under the tyranny. There was no one who

[1] Ep. v. 39, 42; viii. 2.

cared to interfere; no one but the great Churchman at Rome, whose heart bled at the miseries of the time, and whose blood boiled at its injustice.[1] The great Bishop of ancient Rome, the inheritor of the Church and of the traditions of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, spoke with an authority which no one else had, when he reproved a negligent or oppressive provincial governor, or commended a good one, or when he counselled resistance to the Lombards, or peace with them, as well as when he called on the dilatory flock of an Episcopal see to fill up their vacant bishopric, or restrained an over-zealous bishop from worrying the Jews, or inflicted the sharp lashes of his indignation or irony on a negligent or a self-indulgent or an impertinent one. The bishops in the Italian cities and islands had so commonly occupied the places of responsibility left vacant by the civil authorities that this interference on Gregory's part was the more natural. He writes to bishops, as well as to civil officers, to urge vigilance against the barbarians, and the careful organisation of the night watches on the walls of the cities.[2] His deep interest in the condition

[1] Ep. v. 42, a report of Gregory to the Empress; and Ep. xi. 5, quoted by Hegel, i. 173, 174.

[2] Ep. viii. 18; ix. 4, 73. Thus he writes to the Bishop of Terracina: "As we have learned that many excuse themselves from the watches on the walls, your Fraternity will take care that you allow no one, either in our name or in the name of the Church, to exempt himself from the duty of the watches, but that all be indiscriminately obliged to take their turn; so that by all joining in the work of watching the guard of the city may be by God's help secured." "We yet possess," says Sir

of Italy and the Empire, his keen sympathy with all who suffered either from the disasters of the times, or from the selfishness and injustice of their brethren, his fearlessness of responsibility, and unshrinking readiness for work, attracted to him all the difficulties, all the complaints, all the troubles of the time; and he threw himself into cases of individual hardship or distress with the same resolute earnestness with which he organised general measures on a large scale for the discipline of the Church, or the improvement of its public service, or the conduct of a great foreign mission.

The way in which in Gregory the ancient Roman magnanimity and proud love of fairness were united with Christian charity is seen in his treatment of the Jews. The feeling of the Empire and of the Church was against them, and he shared it. He reproves the

Francis Palgrave, "the solemn chaunt by which the sentinel of Modena during the Hungarian invasion in the ninth century, pacing along the rampart, cheered his companions, and beguiled the weary watches of the night :—

"'O tu qui servas armis ista mœnia,
Noli dormire, moneo, sed vigila.
Dum Hector vigil extitit in Troja
Non eam cepit fraudulenta Græcia.
. . . . .!
"'Fortis juventus, virtus audax bellica,
Vestra per muros audiantur carmina :
Et sit in armis alterna vigilia,
Ne fraus hostilis hæc invadat mœnia.
Resultet Echo comes : eja, vigila !
Per muros, eja, dicat Echo, vigila !'"

It was first published by Muratori. See Palgrave, *Normandy*, i. 415 and 719.

Bishop of Luna for not enforcing the prohibition which forbad the Jews to hold Christian slaves.[1] He orders the Bishop of Naples to prevent the sale by the Jews of Christian captives from Gaul,[2] and to interfere with the ingenious arrangement by which the sons of Basil the Jew had become Christians in order that the family might hold Christian slaves. He is very angry when some Church officials, in want of money, sell Church plate to a Jew, and orders the Jew to be prosecuted.[3] He urges preaching and argument for their conversion, and he is in no way disposed to grant them favours; but he sternly discourages the ready inclination of the time to convert them by force or annoyance, or to deny them their rights.[4] He listens to the complaint made by the Jews of Provence of the violence employed to bring them to baptism, and enjoins the Bishops of Arles and Marseilles to abstain from such unchristian and such useless ways of bringing them into the Church. He insists on the prohibition against building new synagogues.[5] But when the Jews of Cagliari appealed to him to restrain the zeal of a Jewish convert, who, with a convert's fervour against his old faith, had raised a mob and turned the Jewish synagogue into a church, Gregory at once wrote strongly to the Bishop of Cagliari to condemn the injustice and insolence of the act, and to insist that their synagogue should be restored to the

[1] Ep. iv. 21; i. 10; viii. 21; iii. 38.
[2] Ep. ix. 36.
[3] Ep. i. 68.
[4] Ep. i. 47.
[5] Ep. ix. 6.

Jews.[1] So he rebukes an over-zealous Bishop of Palermo, on the complaint of the Jews of Rome on behalf of their brethren in Sicily :—"The Jews ought to assume no liberty in their synagogues beyond what the law allows them ; but, on the other hand, in what is allowed them they ought to suffer no prejudice." He has to insist very strongly to protect the Jews of Terracina in their right of meeting against neighbours who complained that they disturbed the congregation in the church ;[2] and he peremptorily orders one of his officers to restore the bond of a Jewish debtor, which the officer had refused to give back after the debt had been paid.[3] Such straightforward justice seems easy and natural to us. It has never been very common anywhere, and certainly was not common in Gregory's days.

But it must not be supposed that Gregory was what would now be called a tolerant ruler ; with no one, in those days, was toleration more than the rare exception to the general rule of persecution. His forbearance depended on circumstances. With the Jews, he saw that violence would only exasperate a race, outwardly submissive, but of proverbial tenacity of character, and with great and sacred traditions. He wished to win them ; he was not above putting secular inducements before them to make conversion easier : "If the parents only feigned conversion, he would gain the children ;"[4] but he knew it was no use

[1] Ep. viii. 25.
[2] Ep. i. 10, 35.
[3] Ep. ix. 56.
[4] Ep. v. 8.

to force them. But with barbarians and heretics, and the pagan populations which still lingered in the ruder districts of Italy, he had no such scruples. In Africa the Donatists were still formidable rivals to the Catholic Church. He was willing to let the heresy die out,[1] and even to let the existing Donatist bishops retain their position.[2] But against any favour shown to the sect, or any attempt to prolong their succession, he firmly protested.[3] He without scruple invoked the aid of the civil power.[4] He would allow no Manichæans on the Church estates in Sicily; his agent was to "persecute" them, and "reclaim them to the Catholic faith."[5] He severely reprimands a Sardinian bishop for allowing any one on the Church estates to remain a pagan: if any tenant is obstinate, his rent is to be increased till he is "compelled to hasten to the right way;" and he adds, "If I find any pagan peasant belong to any bishop in Sardinia, I will take a sharp revenge on that bishop." If the pagan labourers refuse to be converted they are to be punished, "etiam cum verberibus."[6] He orders the severe corporal punishment of a Jew who had tempted Christians to some strange rites, and had purchased Christian slaves. He orders a bishop of Terracina to punish in the severest manner, "so that God may be

[1] Ep. i. 77. [2] Ep. ii. 48; v. 5. [3] Ep. iv. 34, 35.
[4] Ep. v. 8. [5] Ep. iv. 26.
[6] iii. 38; ix. 65. Joan. Diac. iii. 1: "Jam Barbaricinos Sardos" ("La Barbagia di Sardegna," Dante, *Par.* xxiii. 95), "et Campaniæ rusticos, tam prædicationibus quam verberibus emendatos, a paganizandi vanitate removerat."

appeased and others take warning by the example," some people, "who worshipped trees, and did other things contrary to the Christian faith."[1] It sounds as if he had ordered the punishment of death.

It was, of course, his great ecclesiastical position which gave him all this authority in civil or social affairs. But, in his view, the enforcement of justice and mercy, the maintenance of order and peace, the right and obligation to keep civil officers in mind of their functions and duty, was part of his business, as holding the first place in the government of God's Church. Upon him had devolved the office, not only of the Priest in respect of religious service, but also of the Prophets, as teachers and witnesses of all righteousness to great and small, which he found described in the Bible. Still, the primary and direct concern of his life was the administration and discipline of the great institution over which he believed that he had been called to preside with the authority of St. Peter.

The ecclesiastical claims of the Roman See had come, at the time when Gregory became Pope, to be in general terms little short—though they still *were* short—of what they were in later times. They had not only been tenaciously kept up at Rome, but they were readily admitted and appealed to wherever need was felt of a refuge, or an ally, in the theological conflicts of the time; and where there had been ecclesiastical resistance to them, the party of resistance

[1] Ep. viii. 18.

had either placed itself hopelessly in the wrong, or had been left by surrounding jealousies or indifference to maintain an unequal contest with an antagonist so powerful as the Patriarch of the West. But though the ecclesiastical recognition of these claims was great, they were not either unlimited or uncontradicted, and their public acceptance, as a fact, was not yet assured. The Patriarch of the new capital—for though it was new it was the capital of the renewed Empire—the Patriarch of Constantinople, standing at the head of the great Patriarchates of the Church of the East, was a formidable rival. The bishops of Rome had not yet shaken themselves free from the hold of strong and suspicious governments. They had submitted, in several instances, to be the nominees of the Arian and Gothic kings. They had submitted to be nominees of the Byzantine Court. The "most Christian" Emperor claimed the right of approving their election, when the election was not anticipated by a nomination. Gregory himself recognised the Emperor's power to forbid his appointment, and was "consecrated by order of the Emperor."[1] The Eastern Government, when alarmed or offended, still, and after Gregory's time, compelled their attendance on the Bosporus, and did not always respect their persons. And the Popes themselves had at times severely shaken the authority of their great judgment seat. The vacillations and dogmatic prevarications of Vigilius, who had allowed

[1] Ep. i. 5; Greg. Turon. Hist. Fr. x. 1; *Lib. Diurn.* Rozière, p. xix.

himself to be made the tool and accomplice of the intrigues of Justinian's Court, were a serious counterbalance to the influence won by men like St. Leo and St. Gelasius.[1] His weakness and double-dealing had caused the greatest confusion and perplexity, even in Italy. They had occasioned a dangerous schism in Istria, the province of which Aquileia was the metropolis. The Istrian bishops challenged the authority and the orthodoxy even of Gregory, refused him as a judge because he was a party in the dispute, threatened an alliance against him with the bishops of Gaul, and appealed from his violence to the Emperor; and the Emperor received their appeal, and enjoined peace. Gregory had to be very cautious on the perilous subject of the "Three Chapters," even with the catholic-minded Theudolinda.[2] Much as there was to support and consolidate the Roman claims, they were not yet, humanly speaking, safe and beyond the reach of great and permanent injury. A strong and fortunate ruler at Constantinople might even now have, if not shattered them, yet greatly impaired and abridged them: he might even yet have shifted the centre of gravity in the Church from the West to the East.

[1] Ep. i. 5; Greg. Turon. Hist. Fr. x. 1; Lib. Diurn. Rozière, p. xix.

[2] See the memorial of the Istrian bishops, Troya, *Cod. Dipl. Longob.* i. 154. Also Greg. Ep. iv. 2-4, on which De Rubeis writes—"Sanctissimi Pontificis prudenti œconomiâ factum, ut Capitulorum negotio dissimulato, ecclesiæ unitatem Regina servaret."—Troya, i. 168.

To prevent this was one of the great objects of Gregory's policy; and more than anything else, his pontificate decisively made it impossible. For he showed how great and how useful to Christianity Rome could be without the Empire. What may be called his home administration, the ecclesiastical government of Italy, the islands, the Adriatic provinces, and, less directly, Gaul, the portion of the Church territory which came immediately under his influence, was vigilant, resolute, and stern. He orders his bishops as if they were officers at their posts, and his tone is high and peremptory. He allows no negligence, no shrinking from duty, no pursuit inconsistent with their office. He puts up with no resistance, no affectation of dignity, or show of independence. Any opposition of this kind brings down on the offender the scourge of his rebuke and keen sarcasm. A free-living and jovial bishop of Salona,—a refractory bishop of Ravenna, who in the residence of the Emperor's lieutenant thinks that he may assert his position,[1]—a bishop of Vienne, who teaches grammar and the Latin poets instead of attending to his proper work,[2]—a rough Sardinian bishop of Cagliari, who had taken an extravagant burial fee, and who, to spite a neighbour, had on Sunday morning before mass ploughed up his standing wheat, and after mass removed his landmarks,[3]—an idle bishop of Naples,[4] who neglected the poor and the oppressed,

[1] Ep. ii. 52; iii. 56; v. 15.
[2] Ep. xi. 54.
[3] Ep. ix. 1, 2, 3.
[4] Ep. xiii. 36.

and spent his time and his money in ship-building, are treated with scant ceremony and very plain speaking. But masterful and imperious as his orders are, they are given, as far as it is possible to judge, in the interests of a vigorous discipline, and to keep up and enforce a high standard of life and work in the great ecclesiastical army—bishops, clergy, and monks, with their large number of dependents—over which he presided, and who, as might be expected in such times, needed a clear purpose and a strong hand to keep them from every form of selfishness and disorder. He holds up before the bishops, throughout his letters, and in many different forms, that the first and most urgent duty of a bishop, even beyond that of study and prayer, is to watch over the poor and the oppressed, to assist and feed them, and to protect them at any hazard against injustice and violence.[1] His deep sense of responsibility, his love of right and goodness, his ready sympathy for the weak and the suffering, his warm affections, shine visibly through the severity of his reproofs and the strictness of his commands; nay, even the genuine personal humility of the man, his reluctant submission to a heavy task, and his modest estimate of his power to fulfil it, are not concealed by his very determined purpose to let nothing stand in his way in carrying his task through to the uttermost. His judgments were not always discriminating, he sometimes accepted from his agents one-sided statements, his rebukes were sometimes

[1] See Ep. x. 36.

hasty; these are his own frank admissions;—it may also be that the objects of his sympathy were not always as worthy as he thought them—such possibilities occur to a reader of his letters; not unfrequent at any time, they become likely in a rough and disordered one. But of the general aim and spirit of his administration, of his sincere and disinterested wish to do his own duty, and to make every one else do theirs; of his lifelong war against corruption, selfishness, sloth, and oppression in the Church, no reader of his letters can doubt.

In a state of social disorganisation like that of the sixth century, corruption was sure to be deep and widespread. The form in which Gregory had specially to deal with it was simony. We do not gather from his letters that the higher clergy, at least, were other than regular and respectable in their way of living. He finds fault with neglect, with ignorance, with temper, even with fondness for jovial society, but very seldom, in the case of bishops, with license. But what he is afraid of, especially in the semi-barbarous churches, like that of the Franks, is the growth of corrupt bargaining in obtaining posts, which had now become places of dignity and influence; and he denounces and condemns it with a vehemence and in terms which later times found inconvenient. "Simony"—this was his constant phrase—"was the first and the worst of *heresies*." This was not mere rhetorical strength of phrase. He meant distinctly to say that simony was a crime against the faith

as much as Arianism, though in a different way. His zeal against it does him the highest honour. He was so fearful of the slightest step towards it, or the faintest pretext for it, that he systematically refused all presents offered to himself.[1] But his language was a curious example of the dangers of a tempting argument and an incautiously large premiss. It was a telling thing to say that simony was a heresy and the worst of heresies; that the grace of God could not be purchased for money, and that therefore, what Simon could not receive, he could not give. It answered Gregory's purpose; but in later times the position was seen to have formidable consequences. It became necessary, as time went on, and the idea of infallibility came in, to maintain that no Pope, however bad in life, could be a heretic in faith; and further, the validity of half the ordinations in Christendom depended on their being absolutely unaffected by the unworthiness of the ordainers. But as it was quite certain that Popes had been guilty of simony, it became necessary to revise the definition of heresy, even though given deliberately by a Pope, and to take simony out of it; it was equally necessary to do so, to save the orders of the whole Church. The difficulty was easily perceived; the trouble which it gave, and the shifts to which recourse was necessary, to get rid of the ruinous inferences, inevitable from Gregory's sweeping propositions, in which he was further supported by St. Leo and St. Ambrose, may be seen in

[1] Ep. ii. 23; i. 66; ix. 2.

Gratian's harmonised collection of canonical rules.[1] But if Gregory, in his honest hatred of corruption, used dangerous weapons against it, and gave embarrassment to his less scrupulous successors, he was illogical in the best of causes. He is not the first or the last reasoner who has defended truth and right by bad arguments. Heresy was the word which frightened his age, and certainly over hastily he caught at it. But indeed he was right in thinking that this kind of corruption, by which even good men came to think that they might buy themselves into Church offices and work, would as surely demoralise and poison the Church as heresy itself. It was worth a mistake and mis-statement, which only affected the equally great over-statements of men afterwards, in order to impress in strong and alarming language on the rough people round him, the danger of degrading by discreditable bargains the one office which commanded moral respect in an age of violence.

He thus kept up the authority of his See, and presented it to the troubled and violent world around him as a public benefit. He required power to contend with anarchy, and he used it freely with the willing consent of the West. But he had one anxiety —the greatness and the claims of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The rivalry between the two was inevitable. The Eastern Patriarch, chief of the ancient Greek-speaking and Syrian Churches, could appeal to traditions quite as venerable as those of

[1] Gratian, *Decretum*, p. ii. c. i. qu. 1.

Rome; he ruled over a clergy more cultivated and more learned,[1] and quite as much versed in the dogmatic and practical Church questions of the time; and though he was not, like the Roman bishop, alone in his imperial city, and was overshadowed by the presence of the Emperor and the Court, it was difficult to say whether this detracted from, or added to, his dignity and his importance. Gregory shows no jealousy of the Emperor and the Government. He treats the orders of the Court, the *voluntas palatii*, with the greatest deference, even when they seem to trench on the ecclesiastical province,[2] or threaten interference with his own orders.[3] His language is even obsequious, to those whom he looks upon, not only as "Lords of the Universe" by the gift of God, but as "guardians" by the same authority, "of the peace of the Church."[4] But on the pretensions and actions of his brother Patriarch he keeps a watchful and severe eye. John *the Faster* was a man of as great reputation for sanctity at Constantinople as

[1] The difference of culture at Rome and Constantinople may be seen by comparing the style of the Greek reports and histories of Priscus, Procopius, and Menander, with anything written at the same time in Latin. The Byzantines still write good literary Greek, well worded and well composed, fit for a clear statement or well-told story. The Latin has already sunk down to mediæval degeneration, often strong in natural and unexpected phrases, but with no sense of the value and proportion of words, and rude and clumsy in structure. It soon quitted the control of grammar.

[2] *Vide* Ep. ix. 41, and v. 21, about Maximus of Salona.

[3] *Vide* Ep. iii. 65; iv. 20, 47; v. 40. [4] Ep. v. 21; vii. 6.

Gregory at Rome. There had been some ill-feeling between him and Gregory's predecessor Pelagius,[1] who had claimed to annul the proceedings of a synod at Constantinople, on the ground that John had used the title of Œcumenical or Universal Bishop. The title was really no novelty; it was given by Justinian to the Patriarch of Constantinople, and is enshrined in his laws.[2] But the assumption was no doubt a threatening one to the Primacy of Rome; and we can see signs in the early letters of Gregory's pontificate that it had made a strong impression upon him.[3] At length, in the fifth year of his pontificate (January 595), Gregory thought it time to make a stand against a title which by continued usage was becoming formidable; and he began the series of famous letters,[4] of which such ample use has been made against his successors, condemning, in the most unsparing terms, the title of Universal Bishop. The condemnation is, indeed, as absolute as definite reasons and violent language can make it; but the popular controversial use of it, as a condemnation by Gregory of the pretensions of the Roman See, must be considered as an instance of theological boldness or innocence. For it is assumed that Gregory, in condemning the word, absolutely condemned the thing; whereas the truth is that he only condemned the word and title, and

[1] Ep. v. 18.
[2] Gieseler, § 117, n. 29; § 94, n. 72; § 93, n. 20.
[3] *Vide* iii. 53 (593).
[4] Ep. v. 18-21; vii. 27, 31, 33; ix. 68.

that because it had been assumed by his rival at Constantinople, and symbolised his pretensions. Gregory in his objections shows the exaggerations and the inconsistencies of temper; if there is a "Universal Bishop," he says, then there are no other bishops; a "Universal Bishop" absorbs or subjects to himself all the members of the Universal Church;[1] none of the saints, not even Peter, used the word. Further, it is "corrupting" the faith of the Universal Church, for if one bishop be universal, the whole Church, if he falls, falls with him;[2] and many patriarchs of Constantinople have been heretics. He seems absolutely unconscious that the same objections might be made to all that he took for granted in his own position and duty. But to be all that the title of Universal Bishop practically and really signified Gregory certainly made no hesitating claim. He spurned, indeed, the pompous name, as unbecoming a Christian, and as invented by that ostentation and pride of office which he very sincerely despised and hated. And his protest undoubtedly does further exclude that later development of the Papal office which annulled the independence of bishops, and placed its own delegated authority on their thrones. But that every bishop in Christendom, including him of Constantinople himself, owed to the Patriarch of Rome and the successor of St. Peter an account of his faith and con

[1] v. 18; vii. 33.

[2] vii. 27. So v. 19: "In isto scelesto vocabulo si consentimus nihil est aliud quam fidem perdere."

duct, and was liable to his judgment, was certainly Gregory's belief, and he systematically acted upon it.[1] The vehement and extravagant language[2] in which he condemned the use of the invidious title by John the Faster was called forth by the anxious care with which he guarded the prerogative of Old Rome from the encroachments of the New. The famous *Servus Servorum Dei* doubtless expressed what he wished to consider himself. But the servant of the servants of God would assuredly have, in their interests as he thought, confronted pride and stiffened himself against resistance and punished insubordination in his bishops, with as much determination as if he had been invested with all the titles which could be devised by the Chanceries of the two capitals.[3]

[1] Ep. ix. 59: "Si *qua culpa in Episcopis invenitur, nescio quis sedi Apostolicæ Episcopus subjectus non sit.* Cum vero culpa non exigit, omnes secundum rationem humilitatis æquales sunt. ix. 12: Nam de Constantinopolitana ecclesia quod dicunt, *quis eam dubitet sedi Apostolicæ esse subjectam*, quod et piissimus dominus Imperator, et pater noster Episcopus (*i.e.* Cyriacus), assidue profitentur?" See also iii. 57.

[2] The violence of his language is inexhaustible: "*Superbum* vocabulum, *scelestum, pompaticum, perversum, pestiferum, profanum, stultum, superstitiosum; imperialia verba,* '*nomen blasphemiæ,*' *nefandum nomen.*" "Quosdam superbe humiles et ficte blandos." It amused the Greeks (*vide* vii. 33).

[3] Compare Ep. iv. 47: "Ego . . . paratior sum mori, quam beati Petri ecclesiam meis diebus degenerare. Mores autem meos bene cognitos habes, quia diu porto: sed si semel deliberavero non portare, contra omnia pericula lætus vado." Ep. v. 20: "Qui contra omnipotentem Dominum per inanis gloriæ tumorem cervicem suam erigit, in omnipotenti Domino confido, quia meam sibi nec cum gladiis flectit."

From his point of view Gregory was right. Imperialism[1] still filled the air, in the Church as well as the State, and was held to be a condition of the continued unity of the Church; the one unity that seemed left to mankind. A double government at Rome and Constantinople seemed, while every one was quarrelling, to be a standing menace to that unity, and his Roman instinct, as well as his ecclesiastical traditions, prompted Gregory to his formal and vehement protest against the pretensions of his Eastern rival. We have not the answer of John the Faster to Gregory's eager remonstrances. They made no impression on him or on the Emperor Maurice. The Emperor only observed that it was a pity to quarrel and cause scandal about such a "frivolous" trifle. Gregory answered that there were trifles and trifles, and that when Antichrist should call himself God he will be but using an empty title of two syllables, though the act will be one of portentous blasphemy; and he goes on to add that the pride which claims to be called the one sole priest is a sign and herald of that of Antichrist. Boniface III. afterwards obtained from Maurice's murderer, the hateful usurper Phocas, a prohibition of the use of the title, which Gregory had in vain asked of Maurice. But it was revived under his successor Heraclius;[2] and the Patriarch of Constantinople has never dropped the title of Œcumenical

[1] "Vestra pietas, quam omnipotens Deus cum serenissimo Domino, *universo mundo præesse constituit.*"—(To the Empress, Ep. v. 21.)

[2] Gieseler, § 117, n. 29-34.

Patriarch. But in the West, and at Rome, the transaction was accepted, and was remembered, as a decisive and final blow to any claim, even to equality, on the part of the Bishop of the new capital. Gregory was inconsistent in his arguments and language. He may have been actually himself that which he was denouncing in his Greek brother. He may have inveighed against a word, while he was doing all that the word meant. He certainly availed himself, for his immediate purpose, of reasons, and committed himself to positions, which would be very inconvenient to his successors if they cared much about such objections. But though Rome and its Bishop still continued for some time longer subject to the civil rule of Constantinople, its ecclesiastical position with respect to the Patriarch was defined so clearly that it was accepted as the fixed understanding and tradition of Western Christendom.

There is one deep blot on Gregory's great name, and it is probably connected with his jealous resistance to the assertion of equality on the part of the Eastern Patriarch. The Emperor Maurice, as has been said, took part with the Patriarch. He ridiculed as "frivolous" Gregory's vehement opposition to the obnoxious style and title; he refused to give way to it. There were other reasons why, though there was no break of official friendship and respect, Gregory thought he had cause to complain of Maurice. The Eastern Government had given him scant help against the Lombard enemies of the "Respublica," and had

trifled with the honour and the sufferings of Italy. The Emperor had more than once seemed to countenance troublesome or unworthy bishops. He had thrown difficulties in the way of soldiers embracing the monastic life; and further, Maurice, who was careful in spending the public money, was also strict in exacting it, and to Gregory, whose sympathies were all with the over-burdened and frequently cheated taxpayers, the ruler who had to provide funds for the necessities of the Empire appeared as the harsh and grasping oppressor of the poor. All these grounds of offence and dislike were naturally strengthened by the Emperor's somewhat contemptuous support of the pretensions of his own Patriarch.[1] But, certainly, when Maurice's tragic fate came, Gregory felt no pity for him. He probably thought that it was the deserved punishment of a bad ruler. But if this had been all, however unjust the judgment, it would only have been an instance of the cruelty with which the best men on all sides have often felt towards their opponents. Unhappily this was not the worst. Whatever Maurice might have seemed to Gregory, Gregory knew that he had perished by the hand of a traitor, a murderer, and an usurper. Doubtless he did not know all that Phocas really was; but he

[1] *Vide* Ep. v. 19: "Postquam defendi ab inimicorum gladiis nullo modo possumus; postquam pro amore R. P. argentum, aurum, mancipia, vestes perdidimus; nimis ignominiosum est ut per eos [the Court] etiam fidem perdamus. In isto enim scelesto vocabulo consentire, quid est aliud quam fidem perdere?"

knew that he was all this. Yet, without pausing, without hesitation, without a word of reserve, Gregory salutes him as the saviour and deliverer of the Empire, and breaks forth into rapture at the "glad tidings of great joy" in words which no one can read without pain and shame. Fulsome adulation was, indeed, too common; but such adulation on such an occasion, from so good and great a man, is something more than ordinary flattery.

*Glory to God in the highest*, who, as it is written, changes times and transfers kingdoms; for, in Almighty God's incomprehensible government, the alternate vicissitudes of mortal life succeed one another. When the sins of many are to be punished, one man is set up by whose hard rule the necks of his subjects are bowed beneath the yoke of tribulation; which is what we in our affliction have too long made proof of. But, again, the merciful God purposes to comfort the mourning hearts of the many: and then he raises up one man to the height of power, and by the bowels of His mercy pours into the hearts of all the grace of His rejoicing. And we trust to be early comforted by the abundance of this rejoicing, who are glad that your benignity and piety are come to the Imperial throne. *Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad*, and let the whole people of the Commonwealth, hitherto so heavily afflicted, be made cheerful with your gracious acts. May the proud minds of the enemy be restrained by the yoke of your rule. May the broken and humbled spirit of your subjects be lifted up by your mercy.[1]

And he goes on to pray that in the new Emperor's "most happy times" the Commonwealth may have

[1] Ep. xiii. 31 (603); cf. xiii. 39.

peace, that fraud and violence may cease, and personal liberty be restored under the sway of a pious empire. "For this is the difference between the Kings of the Nations and the Emperors of the 'Republic,' that the Kings of the Nations are the masters of slaves, and the Emperors of the Republic are the lords of free men."

There is nothing to be said in excuse for this, either in substance or in manner. Gregory, who has no scruple in applying the sacred *Gloria in Excelsis* to the accession of a cruel murderer, was deeply offended when, at the installation of a Patriarch of Constantinople, the clergy sang the verse of the Psalm, "This is the day which the Lord hath made." It was, he said, a profane misapplication to the creature of words used of the creature's Lord.[1] Never, certainly, did true and unselfish religion descend lower in flattering the prosperous wickedness which might serve its objects; and what Gregory hoped from Phocas was a support, which he had not been able to get from Maurice, against the pretensions of the Patriarch of Constantinople, and against the growing power of the Lombards.

In Church and State alike the idea of the Empire was still powerful, which long afterwards found expression in the *De Monarchia* of Dante. It was the hope and safeguard of the "Christian republic," of the civilisation and the lawful order of Society. In common with his contemporaries, Gregory, whatever

[1] Ep. vii. 7.

he might think of the person who bore the office, had for the office itself the deepest reverence. And living all his life face to face with an advancing and formidable barbarism, which Italians could neither understand nor cope with, he was thrown all the more on what remained in Constantinople of the old strength and the old traditions of Rome. Maurice had left Italy to its fate; perhaps Phocas might take up again the policy of Justinian. It was only in the armies of the Imperial Government that he could find any counterpoise to the growing power of the barbarian Lombards; and though, at the moment, a precarious peace was supposed to exist, Gregory puts his case before the new Emperor in pathetic terms:—

> Your Serenity will learn from the mouth of my deacon how great has been our affliction. I pray that you will incline your pious ears to him, and the sooner pity us. For how we are crushed beneath the daily swords of the Langobards, and by their endless ravages, behold, for the length of five and thirty years, no words can adequately tell. But we trust in the Almighty Lord, that the blessings of His consolation, which He has begun towards us, He will fulfil, and that He who has raised up in the Commonwealth pious lords will also destroy our cruel enemies.[1]

When Gregory became Pope (A.D. 590) the Lombards had been in Italy two and twenty years, and had not yet settled into the consistence of an organised state. The legend tells, indeed, how the "long-haired" Autharit had marched through Italy to its extremity,

[1] Ep. xiii. 38.

Rhegium, and there had touched with his spear a pillar which stood in the sea, saying, "Thus far shall be the bounds of the Langobards." On the crown of Agilulf, Autharit's successor, was said to be inscribed the title, "Rex totius Italiæ."[1] But these were anticipations. The Langobards were on the way to conquest, but they had not achieved it. They were masters in upper Italy, they had seized cities in the south; the Roman Exarch was supposed to be continually at war with the invaders, but the warfare was a desultory and ineffectual one; and the Lombard bands, though they found Rome and Naples too strong, wandered about Italy with little hindrance, except from the walls of the fortified cities. They were still in the first stage of the barbarian conquests, the stage of raids and forays, the destructive, exploratory, predatory stage.[2] Their devastations, their cruelties, their Arianism, and something specially coarse and repulsive in their character, excited the deepest antipathy among the Italians. Gregory's epithets are of the strongest: "*nefandissimus Autharit;*" "*nec dicendus Ariulphus;*" "*nefandissima gens Langobardorum.*" The epithets are like those sometimes applied to the Turks; they were the current ones of the time, and they continued in the mouths of Italians after Gregory's days, and when the Lombards were established in Italy. The Lombard spoilers, the Lom-

[1] Muratori, *Script. Rer. Ital.* ii. 304. Troya, i. 184.

[2] See the description of this in an earlier time (Justinian) in Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iii. 33, 34.

bard brutalities, the Lombard cunning and treachery, were the heavy and immediate miseries which afflicted Gregory's countrymen. The Empire, which had destroyed the kingdom of the Goths, would not, the Italians hoped, endure the ruffian Lombards. But Belisarius and Narses were gone; and it was Narses who in his treasonable revenge had called in the Lombards. The Empire was hardly pressed in the East by Persians and Avars. Its efforts on behalf of Italy were slack, feeble, and fruitless. The Exarch at Ravenna kept up the form of war with the invaders, but his chief business seemed to be to prevent any one making peace with them. The most serious attempt to get rid of them was made, shortly before Gregory became Pope, by the Emperor Maurice, but it was not by the armies of the Empire.[1] He sent, says the historian of the Lombards, his ambassadors to Childebert, King of the Franks, with a very large subsidy, in order that he should attack the Lombards and drive them out of Italy. Childebert, with a vast army, at once entered Italy; but the Lombards shut themselves up in the cities, and by negotiations and presents made peace with Childebert, who went back to France. When the Emperor heard of this he demanded back the money which he had given to Childebert to hurt the Lombards; but Childebert, relying on his strength, did not even give him an answer about it. The Italians would not have had much to thank the Emperor for if he had

[1] Paul. Diac. iii. 17, and comp. Troya, i. 84-113.

brought the Franks into Italy ; and he tried no other method of arresting the scourge which embittered Gregory's life.[1]

The "swords of the Lombards," the betrayal and fall of cities, the inactivity and helplessness of the Exarch's ill-paid and ill-commanded troops : these are the burden of Gregory's letters. At first Gregory had thrown his weight and influence on the side of the Exarch.[2] He had looked on the Lombards as public enemies. He had corresponded with the imperial commanders, and given them information and advice about the movements of the enemy. But he soon found that he was leaning on a broken reed ; and when Ariulf, the Lombard "Duke," of Spoleto, sat down under the walls of Rome,[3] slaying and maiming, and exacting ransom, and when the Duke of Benevento was threatening Naples without any hindrance from the Exarch, Gregory, how reluctantly we can clearly see, resolved to make the best terms he could with the spoilers. There is a curious passage in a letter of 594, in which he speaks of measures against the Lombards, in which he refused to take part.[4] It seems to imply some sort of plot like St. Brice's Day, or the Sicilian Vespers. "If," he says, "I had chosen to mix myself up with the death of the Lombards, at this moment the nation of the Lombards would neither have king, nor dukes, nor counts, and would be broken up in the greatest confusion. But because

[1] *Vide* end of his exposition of Ezekiel.
[2] *Vide* ii. 29, 30.
[3] Ep. ii. 46 (592).
[4] Ep. iv. 47.

I fear God, I dare not mix myself up with the death of any man."

His efforts were henceforth directed to bring about, if possible, a general peace; but if the Exarch, safe behind the marshes of Ravenna, and caring nothing for the miseries of the Italian provincials, preferred to keep the quarrel open, then to make a separate peace for the Roman Church and its possessions. These attempts gave great offence, not only to the Exarch Romanus, a personal enemy, but to the Emperor. The soldiers reported to Constantinople that the priests were meddling in State affairs, were being taken in by the crafty barbarians, and were sending false reports. Gregory's letter to the Emperor is curious:—

In sending me their Most Serene commands, the Piety of our Lords, in their reprimands, while wishing to spare me, has not quite done so; for in gently calling me "simple," they call me a fool (*fatuus*) for being deceived by the craft of Ariulph. Well; I confess it is so. If your Piety had not said so, the facts proclaim it. For if I had not been a fool I never should have come to suffer what I do here, among the swords of the Lombards. But as to what I reported, that Ariulph was ready in good earnest to come over to the State (*Rempublicam*), not only am I not believed, but I am rebuked for having lied. . . . And if the captivity of my country were not every day and moment increasing, I would gladly hold my peace about any slight or ridicule thrown on myself. But what afflicts me is this, that the same thing which causes me to endure the charge of falsehood is that which daily brings Italy captive under the yoke of the Lombards. For while no credence is given to my information, the power of the

enemy is enormously increasing. But I submit this to my most religious Lord: let him think all the ill that may be about me; but as to the welfare of the State (*Reipublicæ*), and the question of the loss of Italy, do not let him easily listen to everybody. Let him believe facts rather than words.[1]

It was not easy to make any peace, for the Lombards had many heads, and had not laid aside the uncontrollable habits of barbarian invaders; and Gregory, even when on good terms with their chiefs, continued to the end of his life to complain of the sufferings caused by the Lombard sword, and of their unscrupulous faithlessness. But he also took advantage of a change among the Lombards themselves to attempt a policy more in accordance with his own higher objects. Agilulf, from being "Duke" of Turin, had become King of the Lombards (590); and further, he had married the Bavarian Theudolinda, the Catholic widow of the Arian Autharit. The consolidation of power had begun in Agilulf's strong and able hands. He was a leader with whom Gregory could treat more hopefully than with separate chiefs; and Theudolinda's influence, which was considerable, was, like that of the Burgundian Clotildis over Clovis, and of the Frank Bertha over Æthelbert, exerted on the side of which Gregory was the representative, the side of the more civilised and more authoritative religion of the Roman Empire. Gregory opened communication with Theudolinda. He dealt very respectfully with her prejudices on the burning question of the day, the condemnation by the Fifth Council of

[1] Ep. v. 40.

the alleged Nestorian "Three Chapters," supposed to be sanctioned by the Fourth. He sent her presents, and invited her help, both in furthering peace and in bringing the Arian Lombards to the Church; and though the Lombards were too near their barbarian state to cease to be troublesome and insulting,[1] and Agilulf himself was a questionable convert,[2] the beginnings of a new state of things were made. The child of Agilulf and Theudolinda was baptized and grew up a Catholic. The example of the Court had its effect on the chiefs and the people. Hopeless of getting rid of the Lombards, or subduing them, Gregory rightly thought that the next best thing was to unite them, at least in religion, with the Italians with whom they were to live. They long continued to be a military and ruling race; but they were entirely absorbed at last, and the foundations were laid by Gregory's policy of a fusion and union of races which produced, when it was completed, the strongest and most energetic among the populations of the peninsula. The Teutonic people, with their Teutonic speech, their national organisation and customs, which were long guarded by the legislation of their kings, vainly struggled to maintain a separate nationality against the subtler and more powerful influences of the Latin atmosphere in which they lived. Of the language which they spoke, though an ample list of words re-

[1] See his account of the sack of Crotona on the Adriatic in 596, when Agilulf had been six years in power.—Ep. vii. 26 (597).

[2] Hegel, i. 171.

mains, not a single connected sentence is any more to be read on parchment or monument; the name of the Langobards disappeared; but out of it was softened the famous and more familiar name of the Lombards; and Lombardy became for a time the name for Italy itself.[1]

When Gregory became Pope, it may be said that, in human judgment, the future of the Papacy was still uncertain. In the five centuries which had almost run out since the days of the Apostles, it had undoubtedly won a great position in the hierarchy of the Church. The Councils were the supreme authority in the Church; and to that supreme authority the Roman bishop, like all others, professed allegiance and submission. But his primacy was undoubted; what that primacy involved was a different question, and was by no means a clear one. But, generally, it seems plain that the custom had grown more and more at Rome of claiming in a vague way for the See the continued authority of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul; not of St. Peter only, but of both the great pair who were believed to have founded the Church at Rome, and whose sacred bodies still lay there. Inference was often rapid in those days, and did not trouble itself much about intermediate steps between a premiss and a conclusion; and the exceptional character of the Roman Bishop seemed to flow obviously from that of those whose functions he exercised where they had lived and died. Practically the first result of this

[1] Bluhme, *Gens Langobardorum*, pts. 1 and 2, 1868 and 1874. Meyer, *Sprache der Langob.*, 1877. *Zeuss*, p. 476.

position was to make him the natural judge of appeals. Invested with the majesty of such traditions, and in the centre and capital of the Empire, he was the natural person to turn to, as arbiter and judge, when his brethren could not settle their disputes among themselves; and from the convenience and fitness of such an arbiter there soon followed on his part the claim of exclusive right to hear and decide appeals. The second point was his relation to the councils of the Church. This relation, faint and overshadowed by much greater influences at Nicæa, had become more defined and more prominent at Chalcedon; and since the days of St. Leo a right of confirmation and sanction different from that of the other patriarchs had come to be assumed as a matter of course among the traditions of Rome, though by no means accepted as a matter of course, and, under all circumstances, in the Eastern Church. But undoubtedly the ecclesiastical claims of the Roman Patriarch had been rising with the progress of the centuries, and with the ceaseless controversies of the Church, which emperors, even more than Popes, tried to direct and appease, and tried in vain. The right of admonishing their brethren, common to all bishops of the Church, was used by the Roman Bishop with a claim to special authority,[1] and in virtue of the interest in all parts of the Church which appeals to him from all parts had given him. By the time that Gregory became Pope there could

[1] "Sanctissima illa sedes, quæ universali Ecclesiæ jura sua transmittit."—John of Ravenna to Greg. Ep. iii. 57.

be no question of the prerogative acknowledged in the Roman See, and the rights which this gave of direct superintendence over a large part of the Church, and of authoritative remonstrance everywhere.

But great as the position was, it had much vagueness about it, and it was not yet assured. The East was becoming jealous, and formidable as a rival. It had learning; it had discipline and cohesion; it had living examples of ascetic saintliness; it had on its side the civil powers of the State; and it deeply resented the imperious dictation and the supercilious haughtiness of the ruder Western Romans. Signs were not wanting of a disposition to resist the growing pretensions to interfere and to reprimand which were founded on the long-acknowledged primacy of Rome, and to assert the independence and real equality of the great Eastern thrones. Favouring circumstances and the mistakes of Popes might have wrecked the fortunes of the Papacy. The condition of Italy and of Rome was very precarious. It was not impossible that the Lombards might repeat the policy of the Vandals, and that the fate of Carthage might become that of her rival. A city surrounded by a rising flood of barbarism, not a half-tamed and friendly one like that of the Goths, but coarse and intolerant like that of the Vandals—a population unable to defend itself except behind its walls, and dependent on the sea for all its food—might (it is no extravagant supposition) have perished to make way for some Lombard capital. The Papacy felt itself in extreme danger 200 years

later from the Lombards, when they were Catholics and had become half Italians; and it called in the aid of the Franks to crush them. It cannot be thought to have been safe now, when they were still heathens or Arians, in the flush of their fierce and cruel conquest. An interruption now of the Papal history, just as the barbarians were settling in their new countries, in Gaul, in Britain, in Spain, might have seriously altered the course of events; and even if, after such an interruption and eclipse, it had been resumed, other powers might have established themselves in the interval, both in the East and West, not easy, when once settled, to be dispossessed.

If it is not idle to attempt to trace influences and results in the tangled threads of history, Gregory's reign prevented this. Suppose that at this critical moment of jealousy, depression, and danger, there had been a succession of weak, or unfortunate, or wrong-headed, or corrupt Popes, the East and the Lombards between them might have irretrievably ruined the growing power of the Roman See. But, instead of this, the See was held for thirteen years by a man who impressed his character on the Church with a power unknown since St. Augustine, and even more widely than he, for in the East St. Augustine's name hardly counted for much, and Gregory's did. Instead of pompous feebleness and unenterprising routine, there was not only energy, purpose, unwearied industry in business, but there was a passion for justice, vigilant, fearless, impartial to small and great, a pervading

conviction that righteous dealing and conscience in duty was above all zeal for the interests of a cause, a readiness for trouble and for change where reform and improvement called for them, a large and statesmanlike look abroad over the world to see where new efforts might be made to strengthen or to extend the Kingdom of the Redeemer.[1] And this was the spectacle presented at Rome to a despairing world, when all other powers of order or of renovation seemed spent or paralysed. *There* sat a ruler who, if he was severe and peremptory, was serious and public-spirited in approbation and in judgment, in making not only bishops and clergy, but governors and magistrates, attend to their business and protect their people. What right he had to call upon exarchs at Ravenna, or the Emperor's captains at Naples to do their duty, people did not curiously inquire, so long as in this neglected land there was some great person whom all reverenced, and who was not afraid to call any one to account. There, at Rome, sat a representative of the love and compassion of the Apostles, whose ear was open to every suppliant, who felt every day that he arose from his own bed of pain for the infinite sufferings of the poor and miserable in the wild scene around him, who was ever ready to minister to their distress, whether it was brought to him in the cry of

[1] "Gregorius per procuratores ecclesiasticorum patrimoniorum, *velut Argus luminosissimus*, per totius mundi latitudinem suæ pastoralis sollicitudinis oculos circumtulit," is the phrase of his biographer.—Joan. Diac. ii. 55. Cf. De Rozière's Introd. to *Lib. Diurn.* p. xxviii.

a multitude, or in the wrecked fortunes or pressing needs of a debtor, or of starving orphans. There sat a great landlord, who was not above entering into the petty details of long-accustomed fraud or exaction, which made the lives of his distant tenants, whom he would never see, hopeless and wretched; one who raged against the unjust weight and the fraudulent bushel, and who thundered the anathemas of a council against those who removed landmarks and usurped fields on behalf of the patrimony of the Church. The Emperor was far off; what did Italians care that he was defending the Eastern borders against Persians or Avars? they only saw his useless soldiers and his burdensome and oppressive tax-gatherers. The Lombards were on the spot, in possession, or at the doors: was it to be war with them or peace? and neither Emperor nor Exarch could make up their mind, and they went on trifling with the dangerous intruders. It was no proper business of the Bishop of Rome to take on him to decide a public question of war or peace; and Gregory was Roman enough to wish for good vigorous war. But when there was no one to resolve or act, the Bishop of Rome accepted the responsibility. As he could not drive out the foreigners, he would have frank peace with them; he would make a separate truce; he would appeal to them as a Christian teacher; he would touch their sense of religion; he would attract, convert, reclaim them. Doubtless he was interfering with the concerns of the Empire, with affairs of State, with a province

which was not his; but he was doing the best he could to remedy the evils which made his countrymen and his flock miserable, and he was the only man who cared enough for them to make the attempt. He did what there was no one else to do amid—

> The oppression of the tumult—wrath and scorn—
> The tribulation, and the gleaming blades—

the only one to try for that great crown, of being "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in."

We cannot be surprised that the Papacy came out of Gregory's administration of it both firmer and stronger than before; that his letters were eagerly searched in subsequent emergencies, and by the compilers of the Canon Law, for rules of law and claims of right; that the precedents which he had set were appealed to and used in confirmation of a power which the circumstances of these troubled ages were continually inviting to extend itself. That power which afterwards advanced such enormous pretensions; that power which afterwards humbled emperors and kings, and interfered with the domestic concerns of the meanest peasant; that power which, after claiming to be supreme over law, ended by claiming to be supreme over faith and conscience and reason; that power, certainly Gregory did not create, and did not know. He did not even lay the foundations of it, for he found them laid. But he certainly secured those foundations when they were in danger. He so

administered the vast undefined powers supposed to be inherent in his See, that they appeared to be indispensable to the order, the good government and the hopes, not of the Church only, but of society. Great as were the strictly ecclesiastical prerogatives and duties of his place, great as he himself thought them, and jealous as he was of their undiminished integrity, he went out of his way to be more than a great Church governor; he passed beyond the sphere of purely religious and spiritual interests to give a splendid example of justice and righteousness in the civil and political government of men. To such a place power flowed and gathered itself by natural consequence. Take away that power, so widely and so fearlessly exercised, and what, indeed, was there in those days to awe the seething tumult of violence and passion? Disinterested and just, it was the only power which none but the bad need fear, the only power which men could wish to grow and increase. In Gregory's hands it grew, not because he was ambitious, but because he was just and good; not because he aimed at increasing it, but because from his way of using it, it could not help increasing. All who suffered, all who smarted under fiscal oppression and fraud, all who trembled at the unjust judge or the barbarian's sword, all who believed in right, all who longed to eat their daily bread in peace and to die in their quiet homes—that is, all the long-suffering multitudes who did not live by war, but were ruined by it—could not but wish to see that power more

and more respected, more and more active, more and more able to daunt the mighty ones of the earth. These multitudes looked up with confidence and sympathy to the great Bishop of Rome, who taught emperors their duty, and held up before exarchs the terrors of the day of judgment; whose eye surveyed the whole barbarian world, and who assumed his right to give counsel, or warning, or praise, to the distant kings of the nations—to Brunechild in Gaul, to Æthelbert in Kent, to Recared in Spain. No one was afraid of increasing and enlarging the claims of the Bishop of Rome: why should they? the conquerors, after all, trusted in their swords, and to the conquered he was their best protection from those swords. The virtues of the man, and the disorder of the times, when the old powers of the world were failing, and the new had not yet come, made such an authority as his, if it was to be had, like a heaven-sent compensation for all that had perished in the wreck of the Empire. Why should we doubt that it was a heavenly-sent compensation; that it was ordered by God's Providence, in mercy to men, in times of confusion and change? The power which Gregory had and left grew naturally out of the necessities of the times. But when power has been grandly and beneficently used, men are apt to think that it has established a title to continuance. And so it passed, in time, strengthened by his example, and increasing its demands as it was worse used, to the nominees of the Counts of Tusculum, and to the Popes of Avignon

and the Great Schism. It was held to warrant the victory of Canossa, the humiliation of John of England, the Bulls of Indulgences. It grew up, as it is the way of institutions to grow up; it served its time, as we see in the case of other institutions. The use which Gregory made of it, and the conditions of his time more than justified all that it was then. His own use of it, his own example, and the changed conditions of later centuries, to say nothing of its intervening history, are amply sufficient to justify us in believing that its use has passed away.

# THE EARLY OTTOMANS[1]

[DECEMBER 1854]

THE Ottomans were the last of those conquering races who, during the Middle Ages, broke into Europe, and fixed the present arrangement of its map; and the Ottoman State may be said to be, with one partial exception, the last great territorial conquest made in Europe. Never assimilating to those whom they had conquered, and but imperfectly able to incorporate their subjects with themselves, divided by what seems an eternal bar from the fellowship of other European nations, the Ottomans, in the period of their prosperity and strength, afflicted Europe with incessant and singularly terrible warfare; and long after they had learned not to be ambitious, insulted it with their domestic ferocity and untamed barbarian pride. The curse which they had brought with them clings to their presence still, in the hour of their deep decay. By the very decline of their power, jealousies have

[1] *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman, depuis son origine jusqu' à nos jours. Par* J. DE HAMMER. *Traduit de l'allemand sur les notes et sous la direction de l'auteur. Par* J. J. HELLERT. 18 vols. 8vo. Paris: 1835-1843.

been awakened which could not be appeased, and questions raised which could not be solved, without plunging Europe into a war, of which no one can forecast the issues. At a moment like the present,[1] when, while verging to their fall, they have once more become the occasion of calamity to Christendom, it may not be without interest to recall briefly the steps by which they arose from the most insignificant beginnings to their eventful eminence.

The history of the early Ottomans has been most imperfectly told, and much still remains dark and uncertain in the features which distinguish in its origin that strange and mighty race from its kindred tribes. It is a history, in the main, of wasteful and unscrupulous conquest, like that of other successful barbarians of Europe and Asia. But we seem to discern, even from the beginning, some points of special interest. We seem to perceive in it the remarkable history of a single family, gradually gathering round itself the materials of a vast ambition, and shaping a people and a nation to support it, out of heterogeneous elements, by the informing power and spirit of one household and line. It is an advance of which the earlier steps were as slow and gradual as its subsequent strides suddenly became gigantic. It is a story of great patience and resolution; of an ambition which, unlike that of most barbarians, was not in a hurry, but could keep its object in view, and devise the means for its achievement, without restlessness

[1] The following pages were in type, December 1854.

and without weariness. It was content to work by degrees, and, without losing sight of the highest prizes, was satisfied with smaller ones, while they were proportionate to its strength. And among the institutions of which the foundations were early laid, as the permanent supports of the greatness which it meditated, one was at once the most original, the most terrible, and, for the time, the most effective that is to be found recorded among the inventions of deep craft and heartless love of power, of which history is full. The Ottomans found the art of borrowing their strength systematically, and from the very first, from the races they were subduing; of forcing into their own service, and moulding to their own purpose, the promise and energy which was their natural antagonist. Their history is one at first of few disasters, so cautious and so steadily provident, even while they were most enterprising, were these builders of a new empire. A reverse did come at length, unexpected and crushing. It retarded for some score of years their ambition; but it neither broke up their institutions, nor dismayed their spirit, nor turned aside their purposes, nor in the end crippled their power. It is a painful, but it is an instructive lesson, to compare their stout and persevering course, so wisely compliant to circumstances, but so inflexible in its ultimate direction, their imperious and exacting urgency in the opportunities of success, their self-restraint when it was the time to wait or pause, with the short-sightedness, the despair, the

worn-out and spiritless imbecility, the random efforts, of those whom they were menacing. Thus, at length, Christianity was beaten down, the remains of ancient civilisation swept away, and the seed and promise of that to come destroyed, not by a passing burst of barbarian ravage, but by a polity new and uncongenial to Europe, which had early attained its maturity and secured its permanence; religious in its groundwork of ideas and laws, with a religion bitterly hostile to all that is sacred in Europe; purely and fixedly military in its organisation and aims, as well as its spirit and habits. No glimmering of political life or thought, no dim image of civil rights or duties, ever gave hope, while the Ottomans were rising to greatness, that they would gradually open from the tastes and tempers of their ancestral deserts to the gentler manners, the wider thoughts, the nobler pursuits, the wiser and more equal laws, by which alone nations can be preserved from corruption and decay. There was no germ of improvement in their institutions, yet they succeeded in raising on those institutions a great and mighty monarchy, which, with all its inherent seeds of ruin, has already stood the wear of four centuries.

In the following pages we shall confine ourselves to that period of their history during which they were preparing for their future greatness,—the period from their first appearance on the outskirts of the Greek Empire, till they felt themselves ready to take the great step for which they had so steadily been

preparing, and claim the imperial city, round whose walls they had been closing for more than a century. Our chief guide, as he probably must be of most who study Ottoman history for some time to come, will be Von Hammer. His diffuse and ponderous, yet noble work, is the production of a scholar, a diplomatist, and a traveller, who for thirty years prepared himself for his task by an unwearied study, both of the people whose history he meant to write, and of the original monuments of that history. No one else has yet examined, systematically and critically, the Ottoman records. He ransacked the libraries of Europe from Naples to Oxford; he was able to command the use of the archives of those powers which had most connection with the Porte, at Vienna and Venice; his agents searched for manuscripts in Cairo and Bagdad, Aleppo and Damascus. Of his absolute success, few probably in the West can be competent to judge; and few are likely to qualify themselves for testing his accuracy, by invading once more that strange mass of semi-barbarous literature, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, only existing in manuscript, and dispersed in distant libraries, from which he drew his materials. We must take on trust his reports of Turkish authorities. In the early part of the history, though they are not absolutely wanting, they furnish, even according to his estimate of them, but scanty and uncertain light: but it is all we have, to check the evidence, perhaps even less to be relied on, of the Greeks. But it is necessary, in accepting

the testimony of Ottoman historians,[1] to remember the criticism of Seaddedin, one of the most famous of their number, on his predecessor, Idris, whose *Eight Paradises* he eulogises and copies, but of whom he remarks, "that he is too sparing in enumerating the virtues of the Ottomans, and does not set forth, with the copiousness and particularity which they deserve, the praises of the Sultans." Yet the historian, whose almost only fault is said to be the niggardness of his eulogy, opens his work with claim-

[1] The earliest sources of Ottoman history to which Von Hammer could get access in the originals, and which he used, are as follows:—

1. The *History of Aaschik-Paschazade.* The writer was a witness to Amurath II.'s Hungarian war in 1438 (Von Hammer i. 345), and wrote under Bajazet II., the son of Mahomet, the Conqueror (1481-1512). He "drew materials from the Book of Scheikh Yachshi, the Imam of Sultan Orchan (1325-1359), who was one of the seven present at Othman's death-bed, and who relates the earliest events of Ottoman history from the mouth of his father." It was a forgotten book to the Ottomans in the seventeenth century. Von Hammer searched for it in vain at Constantinople; but found it, and made extracts from it, in the Vatican.

2. An old chronicle, by Ali Osman, reaching down to 1470. It had been brought to Europe by Veranzius, and used by Leunclavius.

3. *View of the World*, by Neschri, a contemporary of Aashik-Pascha-sade under Bajazet II. "Written in rough Turkish, simply and without art." Also used by Leunclavius.

4. The *Eight Paradises* of Idris of Bitlis, who died 1523, and who, at the instance of Bajazet II., wrote, in Persian, the first Ottoman history with attention to elegance of style. Seaddedin regrets in him his extreme luxuriance of diction. What that must have been may be imagined from the *soberer* critic's language, who describes the work as "veiled in musk";

ing it as his merit, that all that is not to the credit of his race, he is most careful to pass over in silence, and that he will only admit posterity to the knowledge of the noble deeds of the house of Othman. It is a partial compensation that his standard of the blameworthy and the honourable is an eastern one; and he records without a remark, and of course without a shadow of censure, the murder of an aged uncle, who was pleading against an aggressive war with the Christians, by the first founder of the race.

We have prefixed to this article the French translation of Von Hammer's, to have the opportunity of giving the caution, that it is not to be trusted.

as "a resplendent beauty among all the brides of the library," whose "musk-perfumed hair, that is, the interlacing lines of its letters, is like the locks of the Houris," and "whose face is painted with vermilion, that is, it is plentifully interspersed with the texts of the Koran written in red ink." Von Hammer procured it with difficulty.

5. *History of Lutfi-Pascha*, down to 1553. He had been Grand Vizier.

6. *History of Djemali*, down to 1550. Brought to Vienna in 1551, and translated by Leunclavius. "The first trustworthy foundation of Ottoman history in Europe."

7. *The Crown of Histories*, of Seaddedin, the first official historiographer of the Ottoman sultans, under Amurath III. (1574-1595). Seaddedin was tutor to the princes, judge of the army, and at last Mufti. Translated, but carelessly, by Bratutti.

8. *History of Aali*, to 1597, "uncritical, but painstaking and impartial, and not written in an official spirit."

These were all examined in the original languages by Von Hammer. After all, though the inspection of the originals has given him a vast advantage over all his predecessors, Gibbon's remark about Cantemir involuntarily recurs, that "he gives a miserable idea of his Turkish guides."

It is to be regretted that this handsome and complete book, which contains at full length all Von Hammer's illustrative extracts and documents, and a useful atlas of maps and plans, should have been prepared, as far as the translator's work is concerned, with such inexcusable ignorance or negligence. The continual and stupid mistakes which recur in this neat and flowery French version of Von Hammer's ungainly but vigorous German, negative, to our mind, the assertion in the title-page, that it was translated "under the direction of the author." We cannot doubt that Von Hammer understood French. We are certain that the French which is put in his mouth by his translator, working, as he says, "under his direction," makes him perpetually say the exact opposite of what he says himself, in German.[1]

The traveller in Asia Minor comes from time to time upon encampments of Turkomans, such as have for the last one thousand years roamed with their horses and their flocks over the provinces of the East. These wandering shepherds still adhere to the life which their fathers led, in the steppes and highlands of Central Asia. They pitch their black tents in the plains and near the cities during the winter; as the summer draws on, they retire to the coolness and fresh springs of the mountain pastures. They can live contented with this vagrant liberty; but they are ever ready to mount and ride, at a moment's warning,

[1] In our references to Von Hammer, we cite, unless the contrary is expressed, from the second *German* edition. (Pesth: 1834.)

to any call to pillage and war. Such a tribe, dangerous or harmless, or merely troublesome, according to the character of its chiefs, was roaming, towards the middle of the thirteenth century, in the north-western corner of Asia Minor, by the banks of the Sangarius and among the oak forests of the Bithynian Olympus; one, and an inconsiderable one, among the many tribes of the same race, who had fixed their tents, and some of them their thrones, in that fair but wasted land. This encampment of shepherds and freebooters was the germ of the Ottoman Empire.

It was but the fragment of a small Turkoman horde, which towards the beginning of the century, —among the many migrations and changes caused among the wandering races of Asia by the devastations of Genghis Khan, left its seats in Khorasan, which lay in the track of the Mongol invasions, to seek safer and remoter pasture grounds by the sources of the Euphrates. They seem to have wandered down the course of the river, to the neighbourhood of Aleppo, till, on the death of Genghis Khan, they again turned their faces eastward, towards their old abodes; but as the tribe was crossing the Euphrates, the horse of their leader, Suleiman Schah, stumbled from the steep bank, and his rider was drowned in the stream, at a spot which still keeps the name of the "Turk's Grave." This broke up the camp. Suleiman left four sons. Two of them continued their course eastward, and with the majority of the tribe, their posterity have been lost among the nomad hordes into which they

melted. The other two, Ertoghrul and his brother Dundar, with but 400 families, turned once more to the west, to become the founders of the mighty and terrible house of Othman.

At that time, the nominal masters of Asia Minor were the Turkoman Sultans of the family of Seljouk, who ruled at Iconium. Their protection was sought by their humbler kinsmen under Ertoghrul. The story goes, that in the journeyings of Ertoghrul and his tribe, they came upon a battlefield, where a fight was going on between two unequally matched armies. Ertoghrul could not resist the temptation to join in the fray; and, as he was a lover of justice and equity, resolved while yet at a distance, and not knowing who were the combatants, to assist the weaker side. He found, after his horsemen had decided the battle, that he had helped the Sultan of Iconium, the great Alaeddin, against an overpowering force of Mongols. But with his ready hand, and love of fair play, Ertoghrul's ambition and desire was only for the retirement and peace of an unmolested pastoral life. He asked for no reward from the Sultan, but to be allowed to feed his flocks in some safe and secluded district; and Alaeddin assigned him the Black Mountain near Angora. Such was the account which the servants of the house of Othman delivered to its chroniclers, and which they had heard from the elders of the tribe, respecting the first occasion of the close alliance between their chiefs and the Seljoukian sultans. But the retired pasture grounds of the

Black Mountain were in time exchanged for a more public scene of life, which tempted and favoured more aspiring desires, and more stirring adventure.

In the decline of the Eastern Empire, its Asiatic border had gradually shrunk back before the Persians, the Arabs, and the Seljouks, from the Euphrates, to the south-eastern horizon of Constantinople, the Bithynian hills. The river Sangarius, with its chain of forts, and the passes of Olympus behind it, which covered the frontier, and fenced in the green and wooded plain which was spread round the walls of Nicomedia and Nicæa, had more than once been forced by the invaders, and Bithynia with its royal cities lost and regained, in the vicissitudes of border war. Bithynia was now a province of the Byzantine Empire, the last that remained to it on the other side of the Bosporus; and the outlying fringe of plain that extends beyond its mountain border, from the eastern slopes of Olympus to the banks of the Sangarius and the Thymbres was a debatable ground, occupied and fought over both by Greeks and Seljouks. Here Alaeddin settled Ertoghrul and his horde, as an advanced camp, to guard the outskirts of his dominions, and annoy those of his Christian neighbours. He could not have chosen a more efficient garrison. In the wasted and depopulated plain, and the extensive river banks, and in the cool summits and uplands of the neighbouring hills, the flocks of the tribe found ample and congenial range for their winter and summer wanderings; and its rapid and active horse-

men were not more ready to defend their new pasture grounds, than they were to challenge the risks and excitement of border frays and plunder. They were skilfully and resolutely led; and a great trial of strength and cunning with the Greek borderers and their hired Tartar allies, established Ertoghrul's name, and his claim to the confidence of Alaeddin. In the front of the battle rode a crowd of light-armed skirmishers, whose name, the *Akindji*, became in later times but too familiar to the Christians of Hungary and Germany, as the name of the irregular bands, who preceded the march of the Ottoman hosts, and whose furious onset was the signal of battle. Behind their cover came the main array, the 444 companions of Ertoghrul (Turkish tradition, which delights in combinations of the number *four*, has preserved the exact number), which helped Alaeddin when he was overpowered by the Mongols. For three days and three nights the battle lasted; it began in the defiles of Olympus, crossed the mountain, and descended into the plain of Brusa; but in the end Ertoghrul broke and trampled down his enemies, and chased them through the plain, to the edge of the sea. Alaeddin waited anxiously for the news, and in memory of the victory, and of the fiery horsemen of the vanguard, he called the name of the district which he had given to Ertoghrul, *Sultan Œni*, the *Sultan's Fore-front*. *Sultan Œni*—which still keeps the name, as a Sandjak or fief of the Ottoman Empire—was the first land which the founders of that empire could

call their own—the first foothold, from which they advanced, step by step, to the conquest of half the Roman dominion. In the narrow canton of *Sultan Œni* are found the first local names of Ottoman history, made to the nation venerable by their associations with the abodes, the fortunes, the graves of its patriarchs, heroes, martyrs. Here are found the scenes of their birth, their combats, their loves, their councils. Here is still seen the village where the Cilician wife of Othman, long wooed and hardly won, spent her maiden years, with her aged father, the venerable Scheikh Edebali. And here by the roadside, the ancient domed tomb among the cypresses on the hill, of the Turkoman leader, whose children have arrogated to themselves a place above all other earthly thrones, is visited by Mahometan pilgrims with pride and devotion, near the hamlet where he ruled.[1]

There was nothing in the achievements of Ertoghrul and his camp to portend the greatness which his children were to reach. A remarkable contrast to the rise of most Asiatic empires, which often, like those of Genghis and Timour, grew to their colossal and terrific power in the life of one generation, the Ottomans advanced steadily, but at first almost imperceptibly. The Ottoman legends relate the dream of Ertoghrul, who had sought hospitality in the house of a holy dervish; and after he had stood all night long reading the Koran fell asleep, and in the dreams

[1] The village of *Shughut*, or *Sogud*, near the Sangarius. Leake: Asia Minor, p. 15.

of morning, the time when dreams are divine, received the promise, that as he had honoured the Eternal Word that night by his devout watching, his children should be had to honour throughout all generations. But all that had been granted to Ertoghrul, at the end of a life of nearly a century, was but a wasted and narrow border tract, with its ruined villages and lonely hills; and Othman, his greater and more restless son, though he turned the thoughts of his tribe towards wider conquests, and though from him a nation and its name, new in history, had its beginning, yet had barely, at the end of his threescore years and ten, made himself master of half a small and feebly defended province.

The accounts of Othman's life pass insensibly from legends to history.[1] They begin with the patriarchal simplicity and romantic adventures of a chieftain of the desert; they end with the first rude outlines of the founder of a dynasty, and the territorial prince. But even the legendary part of his history—the stories of his marriage, his friendships, and the marriage of his son—exhibit, as it were in rudiment and figure, some of the most characteristic features of what was

[1] The names of *Othman*, *Bajazet*, *Amurath*, *Mahomet*, are so naturalised in our language, that incorrect, and needlessly incorrect as they are, it is hardly worth while, at least in a paper like the present, and speaking of certain well-known historical persons, to replace them with *Osman*, *Bayazid*, *Murad*, *Mohammed* or *Mahmoud*. It is too late to change, in general use, the familiar *Ottomans* for the more accurate *Osmans* or *Osmanli*; just as it would be to introduce the native forms of the names of Lyons, Leghorn, Naples, Florence.

afterwards the policy of his race. Othman wooed and won a foreign wife to be the mother of his children. Besides his Tartar brethren and comrades, the "Alps," whose names are joined with his in the story of his wars, he sought beyond the camp the friendship of two sorts of men. The counsellors whom he venerated, whose sanction he sought for in all his plans, whose abodes he visited with reverent humility, and for whom lands and houses were largely and solemnly set apart in all his conquests, were the scheikhs and dervishes, the learned and holy men of Islam. For his most daring and trustiest captain, he had won over from his race and his faith, a Christian apostate. And as he had himself married out of his own race, so the legends tell us, how he laid in wait for and carried off into captivity a Christian damsel, to be the wife of his young son. We see already a foreshadowing of the domestic and administrative usages of the Ottoman house—its mixture of foreign blood, its slave marriages, its array of viziers and generals, torn away or allured from the choicest youth of surrounding Christendom; and a fierce military spirit and institutions adapted only for war, intimately allying themselves with a religious element, and owning their only control in its ministers.

Othman had long to wait, and much to endure, before he could win the wife whom he had chosen, Malchatoun, the daughter of Edebali, a holy man, who had wandered from his birthplace in Cilicia among many cities of Islam, and had at last chosen

for the resting-place of his old age a village in Bithynia. Othman's love was passionate and strong. He visited with assiduous and humble reverence the threshold of the venerable Scheikh. But difficulties and dangers met and sorely tried him. Edebali refused to give his only daughter. Othman had a rival in the Greek chief of Dorylæum, who assembled his friends, and laid wait for Othman's life. Othman, indeed, slew his treacherous enemy, and gained in the affray a faithful friend, Michael "of the pointed beard," one of the companions of the Greek captain, who, after having been vanquished and disarmed by Othman, was so struck with admiration of his conqueror that he devoted himself to his service, and at last forsook for his sake creed and country, and became the ever-ready assailant of his own people; the first of that long line of Christian renegades who have been in every age the fiercest and the most terrible servants of the Ottoman power. But Malchatoun had yet to be won; and it required a dream sent from heaven to overcome the scruples or fears of Edebali. Othman, in spite of the old man's discouraging words, waited, resigned and patient, under his roof, still reverently listening to his wisdom, still hoping in his own perseverance and fortune. One night he had a dream, such as is accustomed to be related of the founders of Oriental empires. He saw the full moon rise from the bosom of Edebali, and descend into his own; and from thence he saw a stately tree arise, which grew taller and more spreading, till it overshadowed the

world. Beneath it arose four of the great mountains of the earth, Caucasus and Atlas, Taurus and Hæmus. From its roots issued four mighty rivers, the Danube, the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile. Beautiful gardens and stately palaces were spread under its branches, with minarets, from whence the call to prayer blended with songs of nightingales and the prattle of many-coloured parrots. At length a strong wind bent the branches, the leaves lengthened out into the form of pointed sabres, which turned to the chief cities of the world, and at last to Constantinople. Constantinople, between two continents and two seas, seemed like a diamond set between two sapphires and two emeralds—the jewel of a royal ring. Othman was about to put it on his finger when he awoke. A century and a half were to elapse before the promise of the dream was fulfilled. But it won Othman his wife, the predestined mother of a line of mighty kings, the last and the longest of the royal races of Islam.

For his son Orchan also he sought a wife of fairer beauty and higher blood than could be found in the black tents of his wandering brethren. The early legends tell of alliances as well as feuds between the camp of the Turkomans and the Greeks of the towns. Ertoghrul and Othman had formed an alliance with the captain of the castle of Belecoma—an alliance marked by a curious mixture of confidence and mistrust. When the Turkomans drove their flocks to the hills in summer, they left the more cumbrous portion of their possessions in charge of the captain

of Belecoma; but the compact was, that the Turkoman treasures were to be brought into the Greek town by none but the women and children of the tribe. For many years the agreement was faithfully kept. The Turkomans missed nothing at the hands of the Greek captains; and Othman, when he came down to the plains in winter, brought presents of cheese and honey, of horse-trappings and carpets of goats' hair—the labours of the summer months on Olympus—for his Christian ally. But at last, say the Turkish chroniclers, the Greeks grew jealous of Othman's power, and leagued against him. Othman was invited to the marriage-feast of the captain of Belecoma, where the Greeks were prepared to seize him. Michael "of the pointed beard," whom the Greeks had in vain endeavoured to gain over to the conspiracy, warned Othman of his danger. Then he resolved on swift and signal revenge. He said he would be present at the nuptials. But as summer was at hand, and he was going up into the hills, he requested the bridegroom, the captain of Belecoma, to take charge as usual of the treasures of the tribe for the summer months, and to admit the women who bore them into the town. The gates were opened without suspicion; but this time under the long veils and mantles came forty stout warriors, Othman and thirty-nine companions. The captain, with his retinue, was absent, preparing for his wedding on the following day with the beautiful daughter of the chief of a neighbouring Greek town. Othman seized Belecoma,

and then went off to waylay its master and the bridal procession as they passed through a gorge in the hills on their road homeward. The surprise was successful. The bridegroom was slain, and his Greek bride, the "Lotus-flower" of Brusa, was swept off by the Turkoman robbers to their lair, to become the spouse of their leader's son, Orchan.

But as the power of Othman grew, notices precise and circumstantial, with dates and names, appear by the side of these tales of desert life and border adventure. The year is recorded, and the place, in which Othman was raised from the head of a wandering camp into a recognised emir, or vassal of the Seljouk Empire; and again, the date when, after the Seljouk Empire had fallen to pieces, Othman could call himself an independent prince, and began his struggle for conquest and pre-eminence with the other Turkish chiefs, most of them more powerful than himself, who had shared among themselves the heritage of Alp-Arslan in Asia Minor.[1] In 1289 Othman had seized a Greek town at the edge of that plain of Dorylæum where he had long kept guard for the Seljouk frontier. The sultan of the expiring dynasty of Iconium re-

[1] The *Ten States*, mostly named after their first chiefs, were, on the Ægean, *Karasi*, in Mysia, *Saruchan*, in the Valley of the Hermus, *Aidin*, at Smyrna on the Mæander, *Mentesche*, in Caria, *Tekkeh*, in Lycia; the Midland States, *Kermian* and *Hamid*, in Phrygia and Pisidia; on the north coast, *Kastemuni*, at Sinope and in Paphlagonia; in the south-east, the most powerful of all, inheriting the Seljouk capital, Iconium, and holding the approaches from Persia and Syria, the *Karamans;* lastly, the *Ottomans* in Bithynia.

warded the exploit of the rising border chief with the dignity of an emir or prince; and the "Black Castle" (*Karadja Hissar*) on the Thymbres deserves remembrance in history, as the place where the ancestors of Mahomet the Conqueror and Soliman the Magnificent ceased to be private men, and exchanged their rude pre-eminence for an acknowledged place among the lords of their people. The flag, the kettledrum, and the horsetail, the insignia of his new rank, were solemnly delivered to Othman by the messenger of his feudal superior, the Iconian sultan. Othman received them, amid the clanging salute of barbaric music, with his arms reverently crossed on his bosom. And long afterwards, in remembrance of the investiture of the Emir of Karadja Hissar, his proud successors stood in the same attitude when the trumpets and cymbals of the host sounded forth at the hour of prayer, till Mahomet the Conqueror thought it time to abolish the memento of his forefather's dependence and rise to greatness, with the observation that forms of reverence which have lasted 200 years have lasted too long.

At Karadja Hissar, the seat of his new government, Othman established a weekly market, according to a custom still characteristic of the Turkomans,[1] with its overseers, and a tribunal, which became famous through the neighbourhood for its justice and impartiality. He turned the church into a mosque; and

[1] Burnes's *Travels*, ii. 225; iii. 7. Probably a fairly correct idea may be formed of Othman's tribe, from Burnes's account of the Turkomans of Shurukhs. Vol. iii. cc. xii.-xv.

to the mosque he appointed the ministers of public prayer and preaching, and the judicial expounder of the religious and civil law. But he did not do this before he had first consulted the Elders of his camp, and the holy Scheikh Edebali, by whose words he was guided, and till, by their advice, he had sought and obtained the sanction of his liege lord. But the Seljouk power was fast hastening to its ruin. For ten years only after the Sultan of Iconium had invested Othman with the rank of a vassal emir, was the name of the last Alaeddin named, as his sovereign and liege lord, in the public prayer of Othman's town.[1] In the last year but one of the thirteenth century, Alaeddin's name was changed in the prayer which was said in the Mosque of Karadja Hissar, for that of Othman. And from this era, the opening of the fourteenth century, so famous in the religion and the poetry of the West, no other name but that of their own princes has been heard in the Friday worship within the Ottoman dominions. The Mahometan historians remark that the opening of each of the centuries of their era, which at that epoch nearly corresponded with the division of those of our own,[2]

[1] A Mahometan ruler is known as an independent sovereign by two tokens:—1. When he coins money in his own name; 2. When the solemn Friday prayer is said in his name.

[2] It need perhaps hardly be observed, that the Mahometan years consist of *lunar* months; so that the years of *their* centuries gain on the years of *ours*. The beginning of the eighth century from the Hegira, thus nearly coincided with the beginning of the fourteenth century of our era. The remark is less accurate than characteristic.

had been marked, up to the time of Othman, by the appearance of some renowned and mighty prince. The Prophet himself, the founder of the Ommiades, the great Caliph Al-Mamun, the first of the Fatimites in Egypt, the last of the great Abbasides, and lastly, the devastator of the world, Genghis Khan, "stand like colossal figures, in the portal, each of his century." At the threshold of the eighth, stands a name, after the Prophet, the mightiest of all, that of the founder of the Ottomans.

Othman had extended the limits of his father Ertoghrul's narrow domain; and villages on the western side of Olympus, at no great distance from the gates of Nicæa and Nicomedia, called him their master. But a traveller could easily traverse in a day the dominions over which Othman first exercised independent sway. He was now, however, a sovereign prince, and he distributed the towns and hamlets of his principality among his companions and counsellors. His father-in-law, the Scheikh Edebali, received as his portion the town of the Greek captain who, in former days, used to guard during the summer the valuables of the Turkoman camp. His young son Orchan was entrusted with the care of the Black Castle, on the southern frontier of Othman's land; and he himself, from the summits of Olympus, cast his eyes westward to the rich plains and fenced cities of Bithynia. The storm was not long in coming. A solemn council was held to deliberate whether Othman and his companions should try to add to their conquests.

Dundar, his uncle, a patriarch of ninety years, who had come with Ertoghrul from the banks of the Euphrates, counselled peace. Othman's answer was an arrow in the heart of his father's brother; and thus, his resolution, sealed with the blood of a kinsman, was taken and confirmed to go forth and conquer.

The invaders found little to resist them, except the stone walls of the great cities. There was a time when the Greek emperors had found no difficulty in beating back the inroads of freebooters of the same race and hardihood as Othman's horsemen, who since the days of Alp Arslan, had harassed the Bithynian frontier. Besides the regular armies, who waged war with varying success, the passes of Olympus and the villages of Bithynia, had been given in charge to a stout and warlike race of borderers, who enjoyed great privileges, were proprietors of the land which they cultivated, and were exempt from the oppressive taxes of the Empire, on condition of being responsible for the safety of its limits. These free mountaineers "formed a bold and active militia, which garrisoned a line of forts that commanded all the roads, bridges, and mountain passes;" and for a long time the bowmen of Nicæa were the most renowned soldiers of the Greek armies.[1] But about the time that Othman was born, the last and worst of the Greek dynasties mounted the throne. Michael, the usurper of an Empire, which the Latins and the barbarians had left shattered and prostrate, yet stronger than any of its

[1] Finlay, ii. 411, 418.

neighbours, had neither the virtue nor the genius to restore it; and a Greek courtier of the time declares, "that he systematically weakened the Greek population from his fear of rebellion." Among his measures was the destruction of the spirited and wealthy race who had so long and so effectually garrisoned the Bithynian frontier. By war and by confiscation, "the resources of this flourishing province," says Mr. Finlay, "were ruined, and its population was so diminished, that when the Ottoman Turks attacked the Empire, the renowned archers of Bithynia, and the mountain militia had ceased to exist."[1] Some of these, like Michael "of the pointed beard," the captain of one of the strongholds on Olympus, had carried their valour and their local knowledge over to the camp of the invaders. The Turks of Othman, like the bands of their countrymen on every coast of the Empire, rode and ravaged at will. Near Nicomedia, the mercenaries, who formed the Emperor's body-guard, met Othman in the open field; but they left the victory and the ripening harvest to the spoilers. Othman now knew his strength; and the plains of Bithynia had no longer any rest from the hoofs of his cavalry, nor its towns and fortified posts any security from the daring of his warriors. They were masters of the open country between Olympus and the sea; they rode unchallenged by the banks of the Bosporus and on the shores of the Euxine; and they riveted their hold on a land which they were too few to

[1] See Gibbon, viii. 56; Finlay, ii. 445; Von Hammer, i. 79.

occupy, by getting into their hands, one by one, a network of strongholds or considerable villages, which were distributed by a kind of feudal tenure among the companions of Othman. But there still remained the large cities, whose massive walls and guarded gates, the Turkish horsemen had not skill to approach, nor artillery to batter; and probably their numbers were too small to risk the losses of a storm.[1] But if Othman had no engineers or battering rams, he had that resolute patience which has so often marked his race. He had waited patiently when he wooed his wife; he had time before him, and could wait patiently for conquest. In front of Nicæa he occupied two small forts, from whence he resolved to keep guard on the harassed city, till weariness or chance gave the besiegers their prey. At Brusa he did the same. The posts in the neighbourhood were successively mastered by force or treachery; the Turks closed in on all sides till they had entrenched them-

[1] "These Toorkmuns had made their descent near Meshid four days previously, about ten in the morning, and rode up to the very walls of the city, driving men and animals before them. Not a soul appeared to resist their progress. . . . While we admire the courage of these men, what shall we think of the Persians, who are encamped within two days' journey of Meshid, under the heir-apparent of the throne, and numbering an army of 20,000 men? . . . One wonders that human beings would consent to live in such a spot. The circle of villages round Meshid gets more circumscribed yearly, and in the one which we first entered, every field had its tower, built by the cultivator, as a defence to which he might fly on seeing the approach of a Toorkmun."—Burnes, iii. 54-64.

But the Turks of Othman ravaged with a purpose.

selves within view of the outlets of the city; and for ten years they watched patiently, and apparently without giving or receiving disturbance, at the very gates of Brusa. At last the constraint became intolerable; when all hopes of relief were vain, the inhabitants, through the mediation of the renegade Michael, bought off their lives and a safe departure, at the price of their city, and the sum of 30,000 ducats; a sum which became in after times,—it is said from the precedent of the ransom of this their first captured city,—the regular amount of the annual tribute, exacted from neighbouring Christian states as the price of peace, by the Ottoman sultans. The Greek captain of Brusa, like Michael "of the pointed beard," threw in his lot with the conquerors and adopted their faith, and under the name of Evrenos, became in after times one of the most renowned of the chiefs who led the Ottoman hosts into Europe.

Thus a capital was won for Othman, more worthy of the founder of a dynasty, than the petty villages in which he had hitherto held his residence; and the beautiful city at the foot of Olympus became from henceforth, to the house of Othman, their chosen abode in life and resting-place in death, till in time it was exchanged for a still more magnificent and imperial site for their palaces and their tombs. It was won before Othman's death, but his eyes were not to see it. Othman was on his death-bed when the news was brought that what he had so long waited for was attained, and that Brusa had yielded

itself to his son Orchan. It was his consolation in the gloom of closing life, when old ties were broken, and his course was ending. Four months before, the father of his wife, the friend and counsellor of his own manhood, the holy Scheikh Edebali, had been buried after a life of 120 years; a month after, his daughter, the chosen wife of Othman, had been buried by his side; and Othman was now following them. In the hamlet where he lay, his chief companions, the first men who had helped him in counsel and deed, men of the sword and men of prayer, were gathered round his bed—they were six, and Orchan the seventh. He charged them to carry his bones to Brusa; he would take possession of it at least in death. There his tomb, beneath the "silver vault" of the old Cathedral of the castle, was shown till the beginning of this century, when a fire devastated Brusa; but the resting-place of his body is also claimed by one of those humble Bithynian villages[1] which profess to preserve so many of the monuments of the Ottoman fathers. "Rule mercifully and justly, and uphold the law of Islam," were his last words to his successor Orchan. So died "Black Osman, the Longhanded." He had lived simply, like the early warriors of his religion. He left neither silver nor gold; a salt-cellar, a spoon, an embroidered robe, and a new turban, were all the household treasures of him, whose descendants were the most gorgeous of barbarian kings: but he left some choice seeds; and the beautiful flocks of the

[1] Leake, p. 15.

Sultan, which still pasture in the meadows of Brusa, are of the pure breed of those of Othman. The banner by which he was invested with his first dignity, and his scimitar, with waving blade and double point, are said to be still treasured as sacred relics in the armoury at Constantinople.

Orchan was comforted, as Othman had been, for the loss of a father, by the possession of a new conquest, and the birth of an eldest son. The same system of indefatigable attacks, waged with a steady and patient purpose, against the Greeks, was carried on by him, and the companions of his father's wars. Masters of the plain between Brusa and Nicæa, they had begun to encroach on the last remaining district of Bithynia, the country which forms one bank of the Bosporus and faces Constantinople. Walls which they could neither batter nor scale did not discourage them. They prowled about the enclosures of Semendra, till one day a gate was opened to carry forth the governor's son to burial; the Ottoman riders swooped on the funeral procession, and the mourners and their town became their prey. The ramparts of Aidos withstood the power of Konuralp and Abdurahman; but the heart of the governor's daughter was not proof against the manly beauty of Abdurahman, whom she had seen from the walls; wrapping a letter to him about a stone, she threw it among the beleaguering armies, and concerted a plan by which in the night they gained admittance into the town. Such are the stories told of the gradual advance of the Ottomans.

They are stories, not of fiery valour, but of wily and persevering watchfulness for opportunities. The great city of Nicomedia was taken, or perhaps retaken; and a new Ottoman province, called after the white-bearded warrior who had subdued it, Kodscha-Ili, the "Old Man's Land," was formed out of the farther peninsula of Bithynia, and added to Orchan's paternal inheritance of Sultan-Œni.

The supineness of the Greek Emperor now became alarmed. Perhaps he had looked on the exploits of the Ottomans, as the Scottish king at Stirling or Edinburgh might look on the forays of the Moss-troopers, or on a Highland raid. He resolved, at length, to show himself in person to the troublesome and insolent freebooters. When for once they had departed from their custom of slaughtering the conquered garrisons, and offered him the governor of Aidos if he would ransom his officer, he had returned the answer worthy of bolder times but only in place then, "the Cæsar neither sells men, nor buys them." He passed the Bosporus with an army. The last and stoutest bulwark of the Empire in Asia, Nicæa, whose defence had rivalled in obstinacy the doggedness of its blockaders, now stood in pressing need of relief. The Greek imperial soldiers had beaten back the Seljouk Turks in many a field, and Orchan and his horsemen, formidable to the degenerate militia of the Bithynian towns, were not yet prepared to encounter him. But, according to the accounts of the Greek eye-witnesses, the Emperor seems to have had

no other idea than a short and pompous military parade on the coasts of the Propontis, without object or plan. When he had consumed two days in marching a few miles along the shore, while Orchan cautiously observed him from the heights, his counsellors proposed to him to offer battle, and if the Ottoman would not come down and accept it, to return as a conqueror to Constantinople. This was done next day. The confused and obviously mendacious account of Cantacuzene claims, in the first instance, a complete and sanguinary victory over a detachment of Turks, only 300, sent down to skirmish in the plain. But, after giving in full the speeches made by himself and by the Emperor, to animate the assailants, or to praise the victors, the same writer relates, that when the Greeks had victoriously driven their enemies to the hills, the Ottomans broke down upon the Greek host, "disordered," says Cantacuzene, "with the excitement of a fresh attack, which the chiefs were unable to restrain"; and the result of the encounter was a hurried and disastrous retreat of the Emperor and his army. In the affray he was himself wounded, and exposed to danger. Till the transports, which the Emperor urgently sent for, should arrive, the soldiery were dismissed in separate detachments to find refuge in the nearest forts. At Philocrene, while the throng of fugitives was pressing for admission, the key of the gate was mislaid, and the Ottoman horsemen were at once upon the rear of the crowd hewing down the hindmost. The next day the fight, or the retreat,

was renewed, and the great Hetæriarch, the Captain of the Greek bodyguard, was slain. The Greek camp was taken, and with it the Emperor's tent and 200 of his horses with purple saddles. The imbecile vanity of the Byzantines has led them to give importance to this single and miserable attempt to arrest the Ottomans in Bithynia. But the inconsiderable numbers, given by Cantacuzene, both of the fighters and of the victims on both sides, show its real insignificance; and the Turkish historians, though it was the first encounter of their countrymen with the Greek Emperor in person, and a successful one, do not think the fight of Pelekanon worthy so much as of mention.

But it gave Nicæa into their hands. Wearied out with a long and unaided resistance, and thinned by famine and a plague, the inhabitants capitulated. They bargained for a free retreat with their property; but few of them took advantage of the condition. The majority chose rather to remain under the yoke of the unbeliever than to cross over to Europe and experience once more the justice and care of the Christian dynasty, which had first ruined them, and then left them a prey to the barbarians. Orchan did not molest them. He withheld his soldiers from the spoil of the city; but the widows and orphan daughters of those who had died from the sword or sickness during the siege, he distributed as wives to his followers. The Tartar blood of the whole tribe, as well as that of the chief and his companions, was early and largely mixed with that of their more highly civilised subjects.

Orchan at once turned Nicæa into a Moslem city, as his father had done with the Black Castle, on the Thymbres. In Nicæa was still seen, and still used for Christian worship, the memorable church, in which the 318 bishops had met to settle the faith of Christendom for the ages to come. The Church of the Council was turned by Orchan into a mosque; for the mosaic images on its walls was substituted the symbol of Islam; and amid the rubbish which now marks its site, Orchan's name appears sculptured over the doorway, "like a phantom light among ruins." Here, attached to this mosque, was the first Ottoman college founded, with its first publicly endowed teacher, the learned David of Cæsarea. "In the place," says Von Hammer, "where the two bishops, Eusebius of Nicomedia and his namesake of Cæsarea, had been compelled, on pain of deposition and exile, to renounce their heresy and subscribe the Nicene formula, Christian children, destined to recruit the ranks of the Janissaries, were now forced to forswear their faith; and here did Mollah David of Cæsarea comment and split hairs on the incomprehensible subtleties of the renowned mystical work, *The Seal Ring of Philosophies.*" Here also Orchan established the first *Imaret*, or kitchen for the poor, a kind of foundation which became a favourite one among his successors and their servants; a devout disciple of the old Scheikh Edebali was set over it; and here Orchan himself, with Moslem piety, served the poor in person, distributed to them their dole of pottage with his own

hands, and with his own hands lit the lamps at evening.

But Nicæa retained its importance under the Ottomans only for a short time. The seat of government of the district of Kodscha-Ili was soon transferred from it to Nicomedia; and Nicomedia itself was shortly eclipsed by the fair city of Brusa, which became first the capital of a third canton, in addition to those of Sultan-Œni and Kodscha-Ili, and then of the rapidly increasing kingdom itself. A manufacture of pottery was all that sustained the fame of Nicæa; that too has disappeared; and now Nicæa has to be sought for, within the vast circuit of its own solid and uninjured walls, which seem the enclosure of a wild and forsaken chase, where Moslem pilgrims search for the tombs of some of the heroes of their early history, or the visitor from the West, with still greater difficulty, endeavours to trace the faint memorials, or to call up to his mind the image of the famous Christian city.[1]

Orchan was now undisputed lord of Bithynia. But though his immediate neighbourhood to Constantinople made his position a troublesome one to the Greek Emperor, he was still in appearance the least considerable, and the least to be feared, of the Turkish potentates of Asia Minor. The emirs of the coast, from the Troad to the passes of Issus, were more powerful, and, seemingly, more enterprising. Their friendship was disputed, and their hostility deprecated or used against one another, by the

[1] Leake, *Asia Minor*, pp. 10, 11.

military traders from the rival Italian Republics, who fought for a footing on the Ægean coasts, as French and English fought in later days in India; but even at the end of his long reign, the Venetians had not yet learnt to know, or did not yet deign to acknowledge, the name or authority of the Turkoman chief of Brusa.[1] It is remarkable that after the conquest of Nicæa and Nicomedia, and the final subjugation of Bithynia, a pause, almost uninterrupted, and apparently deliberately self-imposed, of nearly a quarter of a century, took place in the Ottoman conquests. The single interruption (which occurred at the beginning of this period), was the seizure by Orchan of the neighbouring Turkish principality of Karasi, the ancient Mysia. It had been a more powerful state than his own. Two rival brothers called him in to settle their quarrels: but where the Ottomans once gained admittance, they remained; and Karasi was the first to give way before their fortune, of those nine Turkish states which, together with them, had started to independence from the ruins of the house of Seljouk, to be one by one crushed, and again reunited, under the mightier empire of the house of Othman. But after the conquest of Mysia, a deep silence reigns over the annals of Ottoman conquest for twenty years. Orchan sat still at Brusa, and scarcely appears on the scene, except as, at length, reconciled to the Greek Emperor, then, as his ally—his son-in-law—and his haughty and questionable

[1] Von Hammer, i. 130 (1353).

protector. The Greek Empire was falling to pieces before his eyes, torn by the quarrels of kindred and rival emperors, and the ravages of the eastern and western barbarians, whom they called in to take part in their civil wars. It was wasted and ruined by Servians and Bulgarians from the Danube; by the insolent and encroaching merchants of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice; by the merciless and irresistible footmen of the Catalan Grand Company; spring after spring, its shores saw the returning Turkish galleys, and its plains the returning Turkish horsemen. But though among them, at times, went Orchan's Ottomans, they were mixed and confounded with the greater crowds from the maritime states. Orchan looked on at the scene of decay and ruin, so near him and so inviting to his ambition; he was admitted to see with his own eyes the riches and the weakness, the confusion and the cowardice, of the Byzantine Court; he beheld his restless and adventurous rivals, the emirs of Aidin and Saroukhan, eagerly pushing for the destined prey. Yet for twenty years he held his hand, and his border remained the same. No fresh cities were taken or watched over. The old generation of Ottoman heroes, the conquerors of Brusa and Nicæa, passed away, and no new names are recorded in their place. When the Ottomans from time to time passed into Europe, with their brethren from the coast, it was merely for a summer's foray. The chief who had guided their early conquests was no longer riding at their head, and even professed to be

the friend, as he had married with great pomp the daughter, of the Christian emperor. Orchan seemed to have become the most peaceful, or else the most inactive, of all the Turkish emirs; and among the various Turkish assailants of the Greek Empire, no one at the time would have singled out him and his house, as its most terrible foe, and its destined destroyer,—no one, at least, who had not observed and understood the policy of their sagacious and persevering valour. The difference between them and the other Turks, who, contemporaneously with them, and at the moment even more fiercely than they, were breaking in upon Eastern Europe, was the presence in the Ottoman house of a settled purpose. All the steps they made, though not hurried, were connected; and they never made one from which they drew back. The enterprises of the other chiefs, more alarming at the moment, were but the random and isolated adventures of robbers lusting after destruction and booty; important only as they prepared the way, by weakening the Greek Empire, for the loftier plans of their brethren.

For twenty years Orchan abstained from conquest, but he was not idle. While the Christian Empire beyond the Straits was perishing, he was busy building up a power which was to be ready to take its place, and fit to grasp its heritage. The pastoral horde was becoming a state; the leader of the vagrant camp was taking delight in adorning the temporary capital of his house with the mosques and colleges, the hospitals and

caravansaries, the fountains and tombs, which the piety and magnificence of Moslem princes are wont to rear in their royal cities. Brusa was well worth his care. From the last slopes of Olympus it looks over a green plain of woods and meadows; the famous and beautiful mountain, with its forests and its cliffs, overhangs it behind; and its abundant and ever-flowing waters,—the warm, medicinal springs which well out beneath the baths of the city, and the cold, sparkling sources streaming down from above, among its rocks and plane-trees,—have made Brusa famous among Eastern cities. Not less famous is it for the choice excellence of its trees and fruits, its grapes and apricots, its chestnuts, each of forty drachms weight, and its forty kinds of pears. The sheep in its pastures produced the finest wool, its mulberry-trees the finest silk, and drew to it craftsmen, who made the work of their looms, their scarfs and embroidered stuffs, their lawn and their samit, renowned almost to our own day. Before the Ottomans appeared, Christian monasteries had gleamed among the woods of Olympus, or nestled in its folds; the hermit's cell had been hung on its precipices, or perched upon its crests, or hid within its caverns. Their place was taken by the dervishes and the santons, on whom Orchan bestowed his largesses with liberal hand;[1] and Olympus became a holy mountain,

[1] Solitaries and devotees, some of them idiots, others fierce fanatics, others mystics, others extravagant ascetics, played a considerable part in early Ottoman history and its legends. *Abd-al-Kumral* prophesied the greatness, and led the soldiers

sanctified by their retreats while living, and by their sepulchres in death. Among them, also, were the earlier poets and theologians of the Ottomans, who loved the stillness and the shade of the murmuring pines. There they could lie and look down on the glittering city and sunny plain below. The city of Orchan's choice had all that could make it dear to Moslems and Orientals; it was a worthy home for the last conquerors of Islam to depart from, and return to, in their wars, and to rest in during the days of peace. Here the first six sultans kept their

of Othman. *Doghli-Baba*, the "*Father of pots*," who took his name from the pots in which he kept the sour milk on which he lived; *Geikli-Baba*, the "*Father of stags*," who, at Orchan's invitation, came riding on a goat from the woods, with a scimitar of prodigious weight, to head the besiegers of Brusa, and bearing on his shoulder a sacred plane-tree, which long flourished in the sultan's palace there; *Abd-al-Murad*, who wrought prodigies of valour with a wooden sabre of enormous length; *Abd-al-Musa*, who took up burning coals wrapped in cotton—were among the saintly friends of Orchan, for whom he built cells on Olympus. His son Amurath built a cell for a venerated dervish, *Postinpusch*, a religious idiot, who clothed himself in skins. In equally high reverence was held the bleating dervish of Amasia, *Kojun-Baba*, the "*Father of sheep*," who never spoke, but at the five hours of prayer bleated like a sheep, and at whose tomb Bajazet II. built "the fairest and richest convent of the Ottoman empire." These were all *abdals*, or solitaries. The numbers and orders of *dervishes* multiplied with rapidity under the Ottoman rule, in spite of the discouragement given in the Koran to the monastic life, and exercised at first even more influence than in later times was possessed by the powerful spiritual associations of the *Ulema*, the men learned in the law of the Koran.—Von Hammer, i. 111, 151, 192, 137-141. See a curious woodcut of a "*Father of stags*" in Nicolai's *Travels* (Antwerp, 1577), p. 207.

court, and here they lie buried in stately tombs, near the mosques which they founded. Round them are the sepulchres of their children and brothers; and these are encompassed on all sides by the resting-places and memorials of the great men of the rising state, its first viziers and lieutenants; and further, "about the mausoleums of the early sultans and saints of the Empire are grouped some five hundred tombs of famous men—pashas, scheikhs, professors, orators, physicians, poets, musicians." Thus gifted and adorned by nature, and consecrated by so many recollections and such venerable monuments, Brusa rivals Adrianople in dignity and Bagdad in holiness, and still, when the sultan's style and title is proclaimed, it is named as the third city of his empire.[1]

But while the buildings of a new capital of Islam were rising under Orchan's hand, institutions were growing up, during this interval of peace, of far greater significance and importance than the domes and walls of mosques and palaces. It was during Orchan's reign that the rudiments of what was lasting and characteristic, in the internal policy and organisation of the Ottomans, were laid down by men who saw far and reached high. Orchan's brother, Alaeddin, had refused, at their father's death, to receive from Orchan's hand the moiety of their father's flocks and herds, which was his inheritance. "As you will not take your portion of sheep and cattle," said Orchan, "you shall come and help me to feed my people."

[1] See the style, in Ubicini, *Lettres sur la Turquie*, p. 531.

Alaeddin then became his brother's chief minister, and is called the first Vizier, *i.e.* "Bearer of Burdens," of the Ottoman house. To him is ascribed the beginning of the first peculiar orders and regulations which were added, in the Ottoman Statute-book, to the fundamental legislation of all Mahometan states —the Koran, the traditionary Sunna, and the decicisions of the Four Imams. The three principal objects of his attention, we are told, were—the coinage, which was now for the first time struck in the name of Orchan, instead of that of the Iconian sultans; the distinctive costume, especially the head-dress, of the people; and the organisation of the army. Alaeddin's purpose, in regulating the dress, was, that while the Turkoman freebooters were growing up, under the influence of successful conquest, into the feelings of a distinct and ambitious nation, their pride in the name of Osmanlis might be kept up by a visible badge, which should mark them off, in their own eyes and that of others, from the mingled races round them. In contrast to the embroidered caps of the Greeks, and the red felt skull-cap with a turban of bright colours worn by the other Turks, the Ottoman warrior was commanded to wear a plain cap of white felt, of an egg-shaped form, round which only on days of ceremony a white linen cloth was folded.

But the work which has made Alaeddin's name memorable in the annals of his race, was the laying the foundations, and establishing the model, which, in expanded proportions, continued without change

for three centuries, of the Ottoman army. Alaeddin and Orchan were clear-sighted enough to discern that their indefatigable, but untrained horsemen, though they had overrun Bithynia, and worried its cities into surrender, were not strong enough to win and hold for good the realms of the Eastern Cæsars. Even before the degenerate guards of the Greek Emperor at Pelekanon, as long as they kept their array unbroken, Orchan's Turkomans had held back, in vigilant but cautious suspense. And there had lately been seen, on either side of the Hellespont,—specimens of those victorious Spanish battalions, who were changing the face of war in Europe,—a body of disciplined and well-appointed infantry, for whose steady and combined valour no warriors of the East, Servian or Bulgarian, Turk or Greek, had ever been found a match, and who from their stronghold at Gallipoli had imposed terms on Constantinople, and filled the countries round with the terror of their prowess and their ferocity—the Grand Company of the Catalans. No foreign enemy had vanquished these terrible Spanish footmen; it had needed their own swords, turned against one another, to tear in pieces and disperse the Grand Company. Such soldiers—bound together by a like training and devotion to one another, and to the game of war, but by a stronger obedience and more enduring enthusiasm—the Ottoman chiefs foresaw that they would need, for the enterprise which the other Turkish emirs probably meditated in common with them, but for which they

alone patiently and carefully prepared. To the bands of wild riders, who fought as the Turkoman warriors of Bochara and Orgunje fight still, in the deserts of the Oxus, or when they harry the villages of Khorassan, Alaeddin added the rudiments, small indeed, but distinctly marked, of a regular and permanent army. A thousand footmen were enrolled, and retained for continual and united service, by privileges, by discipline, by a frame-work of ranks and divisions, and by an ample pay. This nucleus of the Ottoman infantry shortly gave place, under Orchan himself, to an institution of far more remarkable character. But the organisation of the cavalry, and the names of its divisions, recalled, even in the great musters of Soleiman and Selim, the primitive appointments of Alaeddin. There were the *Akindji*, the forerunners of the army, an unpaid and uncontrolled gathering of skirmishers and plunderers; all who could procure a horse to mount and a sabre to wield, when the call came to pillage and adventure—men who fought after the old desultory fashion of the freebooters of Othman's camp; who, as the Ottoman power grew, swelled into terrible and destructive swarms, and, led by their hereditary captain, one of the descendants of Michael the Greek renegade, used to waste the borders of Hungary and Germany, and even at last dared to penetrate past Vienna, to the sources of the Danube. Then, forming the main strength of the host itself, came the horsemen, who had received grants in the conquered districts on condition of military service;

the *feudatory Spahi*, among whom, as the Ottoman conquests extended, the revenues of the lands were parcelled out, in holdings of various size and dignity, from the *Sandjak Bey*, whose banner, the single horse-tail, gathered round it and led the cavalry of a province, to the tenants of the *Timars* and the *Ziamets*, the smaller and larger fiefs, who with their squadron or their handful of retainers, or perhaps their single horse and scimitar, swelled the levies of the Pasha who ruled over what, perhaps, had been once a kingdom. And, lastly, as a guard to the person and standard of the prince, Alaeddin appointed a body of *paid* cavalry, divided, according to the favourite Turkish number, into four squadrons; a division which, with its names of the *Silihdars* and the paid *Spahis*, and the "Foreigners" and "Stipendiaries" of the right and left wings, remained unchanged in the regular Ottoman cavalry, whose increased pay and privileges and numbers made them, in after times, formidable yet unequal rivals, in turbulence and audacity, to the redoubtable footguards of the empire, —the Janissaries.

This great military corporation, the most remarkable that the world has ever seen grow up within the laws and policy of a state, traced its origin, according to the chief Ottoman annalists, to the counsellors of Orchan. Alaeddin's first experiment of a body of foot-soldiers, raised probably from the Turks of Bithynia and the neighbouring countries, was a failure. Pay and privileges could not reconcile them

to the yoke of discipline; and the materials were not to be looked for, among these untameable freebooters, of a soldiery which should be trained to rival the steady valour of the Catalans. But the grim and patient sagacity of Ottoman enthusiasm and Ottoman policy was not long at fault. Allied by marriage to the old Scheikh Edebali, Black Halil Tchendereli had been one of the trusted seven who stood round the death-bed of Othman, and gathered up his last words; and when Alaeddin and Orchan's son Soleiman were dead, Black Halil became Orchan's Grand Vizier, and left his high dignity to his children of the third generation, for nearly a hundred years, till his great-grandson was cut off in the very year in which he had seen his master take possession of the palace and cathedral of the Cæsars. Black Halil was now "Judge of the Host;" and he showed to Orchan and his counsellors, that though grown-up Turkomans could not be brought under discipline, children could be schooled to anything. The children of the conquered, he said, like all that belongs to them, are given to the conquerors, by the Prophet's law; and that law, besides, declares, that every child, of whomsoever born, brings with him into the world the disposition to embrace Islam. A school of Christian children, cut off from home and country, and trained with rigid discipline to the faith of the Prophet and the practice of arms, will grow up into an obedient and yet zealous and devoted soldiery. They will not much remember, in the pride of soldiership and the

excitement of conquest, their old faith and friends; but their Christian and subject kinsmen will often look with wistful and envious eyes, to the honours and privileges of the children who were ravished from them. *They* will not wish to go back to Christendom and bondage; but many Christians will be tempted to come and share their religion and fortunes. Islam will be served and strengthened by the best blood of Christendom, and the numbers of its martyrs swelled by those who must have otherwise perished in their ignorance.

Other barbarous tribes, weak in numbers, but ambitious in purpose, have, before the Ottomans, recruited themselves from their subjects or their slaves.[1] But none ever employed this resource with such ruthless and deliberate system. The tendency to this policy is discernible under Othman, in his foreign marriages, and in the story of the Greek renegade, Michael; but its establishment in a systematic shape was the deep and far-seeing invention of Black Halil. His counsel led to the formation of the Janissaries from Christian captive boys, and, later on,[2] to the establishment of a *fixed* tribute of young children, from the Christian population, to feed their

[1] Of the Lombards, a tribe not unworthy to be compared with the Ottomans, Tacitus had said, "Langobardos paucitas nobilitat. Plurimis ac valentissimis nationibus cincti, non per obsequium, sed prœliis et periclitando tuti sunt;" and Gibbon adds, that "the smallness of their numbers was recruited by the adoption of their bravest slaves." Chap. xlii.

[2] Apparently under Amurath I.

schools,—a tribute which in the flourishing times of the Ottomans was continually exacted, though, probably, with Turkish irregularity and caprice, chiefly from the frontier provinces, and which lasted till the seventeenth century.[1] But his suggestion also expressed what has been in every age one of the chief secrets of Ottoman success. The Ottomans have conquered and ruled by conduct and enterprise, by blood and sinew, which were Christian once. "From the seminaries of the Janissaries, and the Sultan's pages," says Von Hammer, "issued the greatest men of the Ottoman Empire. As long as the yearly levy of Christian children continued, and the expeditions of the Ottomans yielded their yearly booty of slaves, their most famous statesmen and generals were, for the most part, born Greeks, Albanians, and Bosniacs, and seldom native Turks. Thus the strength of Turkish despotism repaired itself in the heart-blood of Christendom; and by means of this cunning engine of statescraft, Greece was compelled to tear herself to pieces by the hands of her own children."[2] The remark was made before him by a Venetian diplomatist at the court of Selim II.—"It is in the highest degree remarkable," he exclaims, "that the wealth,

[1] The last levy of children from the Danube, Bosnia, Albania, and Greece, is said to have been under Amurath IV. in 1638: Von Hammer, iii. 177; cf. Finlay, ii. 597; and a fuller and interesting account in Ranke's *Ottoman Empire* (translated by Kelly. London, 1843.) from Busbequius, the Austrian envoy, and Venetian *Relazioni*, from 1553-1637.

[2] Vol. i. p. 193.

the administration, the force,—in short, the whole body politic of the Ottoman Empire, reposes upon, and is entrusted to men, born in the Christian faith, converted into slaves, and reared up as Mahometans."[1]

A long time must have elapsed before Black Halil's plan could have borne its fruit, and Christian children have been moulded into Moslem warriors. There is an interval of half a century before we hear of the name of the Janissaries in the Ottoman wars. Their first recorded field was the fight of Iconium (1386),—the first foes against whom their valour was pointed were the kindred and rival Turks of Karaman. But from this time, in every great battle, and in every political crisis, their name is prominent. They were essentially and in their idea a body of picked and trained slaves—the household and family of their master; and it is in strange contrast with the fierce doings of this terrible soldiery, that in their titles of military rank, their internal sub-divisions, their characteristic usages, we find only the homely names and menial associations of domestic life. They were numbered according to their *odas* or "chambers": in each of their ninety-nine "chambers,"[2] they were officered by a "head soup-maker," a "head cook," a "head water-carrier," and a "manciple," or "caterer"; and after that Mahomet the Conqueror had incor-

[1] Barbaro, *Relazione* (1573), in Ranke, p. 8.

[2] This is exclusive of the 100 companies of the armed pioneers and footmen, *Piade* and *Yaya*, who were originally a feudatory corps of infantry, but were afterwards incorporated with the Janissaries.—Von Hammer, i. 98, 727.

porated with the original sixty-six "chambers" the thirty-three companies of the servants of his kennels (*Segbans*), the four high officers who came next in rank to the Aga, and to his lieutenant, the Kiaia, or "minister of the slaves," kept their servile names, which denoted that they were respectively charged with the care of the hounds, the mastiffs, the blood-hounds, and the cranes of the sultan's hunting establishment. Their military badge was the wooden spoon, worn in their cap, with which they ate their soup. What the Caroccio was to the militia of the Italian cities, what their eagles were to the legions of Rome and France, the great iron soup-kettle of the mess was to the Janissaries; they gathered round it for deliberation, as well as to share together the daily allowance from their master's bounty; and a vizier's head was about to fall, or even a sultan's, and uproar and bloodshed soon to fill the streets of Constantinople and the courts of the palace, when the slaves sat in grim and gloomy silence round the hallowed symbol of their union, and refused to touch their master's meat.

But these armed slaves were also the most remarkable and most lasting of military brotherhoods. The world has seen some singular instances of men bound to one another, for the sole purposes of war, by principles or obligations deeper and stronger than those, which hold together for a time the fleeting assemblage of a common army—the soldier citizens of Sparta, the Roman legions of the Empire, the

monks of the Temple and the Hospital, the troopers of Cromwell's "new model." But all the conditions and all the feelings which concentrated and which inspired the valour of Spartan citizens and Roman legionaries, of the brethren of the military orders, and the troopers of Naseby and Dunbar, were combined in the institute of the Janissaries. The ties of home and family which had been burst for ever when the boy began his training, were never allowed to reunite, even in a strange land and a different faith, as long as the soldier could do his work. The hunger and thirst, the watchings and the labours, which annealed to their due temper the spirit and frame of the Spartan boy, were not greater than those which exercised the young postulant of the Janissaries, when he was sent to Anatolia or the schools of the capital, to learn his new language, to imbibe his new fanaticism, and to practise the arms which he was to handle till his death. The mind of the Spartan boy, when he grew to be a man, was not more thoroughly warped from all the influences and interests of civil and social life, to think of war as the only end for which it was worthy to live, and to long for it, as his holiday and refreshment after the austerities of peace, than that of the new recruit who entered one of those dormitories filled with the fiercest of the Moslem soldiery, all of whom had been once, like himself, baptized in infancy into the faith of Christ. Nor did the training, at once so crushing and so inflaming, so narrow and so intense, relax there. In these "convent-like barracks"

all was silence and subjection. The younger humbly served and waited on the elder. Within the walls, and among the brotherhood itself, the word of the superior was the only law, the instinct of the inferior submissive obedience; without the walls the lowest knew no master, except their sultan. They were men who recognised no old kindred; they were not allowed to seek a new one in marriage.[1] Such is the picture which Venetian residents and Austrian nuncios have preserved of this wonderful association in its early days.[2] The only comparisons by which they could convey an adequate idea of their order, their rigid discipline, their simple and sparing fare, their coarse garb, their silence, their grave self-command, the stillness which reigned in their barracks and in their immovable lines, their blind and absolute obedience, were drawn from the austerities and self-abnegation of monastic life. They were soldiers, but soldiers whose demeanour and appearance was that of monks.

Nor was the comparison far wrong. The animating principle of that fiery valour, which, in the early Ottoman wars, boasted—and enemies confirmed the boast[3]—that the Janissaries had never fled in battle, was a religious one. The bond of their companionship was an affiliation to a religious order. The well-known formula of the consecration of their institute, when Orchan or Amurath led the *New Soldiers* to receive their name and their benediction from the

[1] Ranke, p. 19. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 7, 8. [3] *Ibid.* p. 7.

Scheikh Hadji Bektash, need not be repeated here.[1] The Janissaries called themselves the children and family of this great saint of Islam. They wore to the last the badge of their spiritual relationship; the strip of coarse cloth, which hung down behind from their white felt caps, represented the sleeve of the dervish's mantle, with which he covered the head of the first Janissary when he named and blessed him. Hadji Bektash was also the founder of an order of dervishes; and between these two families—the brethren of prayer and the brethren of the sword—the strictest fellowship was kept up. The Janissaries were incorporated with the order of the Bektash dervishes. The Scheikh of the Bektashes was, in virtue of his religious office, the chief of the 99th *Oda* of the Janissaries; in their barracks eight of the Bektash dervishes prayed day and night for the welfare of the realm and a blessing on the scimitars of their brothers. When those famous soldiers were destroyed, the Bektash dervishes were proscribed with them,

[1] "Standing in front of their ranks, he stretched the sleeve of his gown over the head of the foremost soldier, and his blessing was delivered in these words:—'Let them be called Janissaries (*Yengi cheri*, or new soldiers); may their countenances be ever bright! their hand victorious! their sword keen! May their spear always hang over the head of their enemies! and wheresoever they go, may they return with a *white face*.'" —Gibbon, chap. lxiv., who assigns the institution and the consecration to the time of Amurath, the son of Orchan. Von Hammer, who gives it to Orchan, quotes as his authorities two of his earliest Turkish annalists, Neschri and Aali.—See Nicolai's woodcut of a Janissary, 1554.

and shared their fate; and even now, in the extreme corners of the empire, travellers meet with a survivor of the condemned order, asking, with trembling, whether the men who slew the Janissaries, and chased away their brothers, are still in power.[1]

Thus the religious enthusiasm which had carried the first Arabs through their career of conquest, was revived and concentrated in these household slaves. It consecrated and gave dignity to their servitude, and raised them to be the most privileged body among their fellows. The sultan was their comrade as well as their master, and inscribed himself by his simple name, as the first common soldier,[2] on their muster rolls. If the idea of a religious soldiery was suggested to the Ottomans by the knights of the Christian orders,[3] it found in Islam a still more congenial home. Christian Europe, which welcomed to its bosom monastic devotion, refused a lasting place in its system to a monastic soldiery. The ambition and power of the Temple, like its brilliant but troubled glory, soon passed away, struck down by the jealousy of the western kings. The knights of St. John had a longer and nobler history. Bravely, but in vain, on the bastions of Rhodes, bravely, and *not* in vain, on the rocks of Valetta, they stood at bay, when the armadas of the Ottomans awed the Mediterranean, when Turkish corsairs swept the shores of Italy and Provence, and the name of Barbarossa or Draghut

[1] Macintosh's *Tours in Turkey*, ii. 40.
[2] Ubicini, p. 443.
[3] Von Hammer, i. 140.

fluttered the cardinals within the walls of Rome. But relegated to their distant outposts,—keeping garrison in their island-strongholds, or afloat on their galleys in the eastern seas,—the knights exercised no influence on Christendom, except by the tales which came home of their heroic valour. When the Turk had ceased to menace, their work was done, and they languidly expired. But the company of the Janissaries at once made and marred the fortunes of the state within whose precincts it grew up: they were the nerve of its conquering armies, and the masters of its princes; they grew from the most exclusive of soldieries to a great social guild,[1] and ramified from the barracks of the capital to the bazaars and caravanserais of the remotest towns;[2] and when they were

[1] The steps of their decline are traced by Ranke, pp. 19, 20. —"1. Under *Soleiman* I. (1520–1566), the Janissaries *took themselves wives*. 2. Under *Selim* II. (1566–1574), they had *their sons enrolled* among them. 3. Under *Amurath* III. (1574–1595), they were forced to admit among them *native Turks*, of a totally different descent, *who had not undergone their training*. 4. Under *Ahmed* I. (1595–1617), the privates, then stationed in the country and on the frontiers, began *to ply trades*, to engage in commerce, and, satisfied with the advantages of home, to think little of arms."

[2] "The prosperity and trade of Trebizond are perpetually disturbed by the factious quarrels of two *odas* of Janissaries, in one of which 30,000 *Lazi* are commonly enrolled."—Gibbon (from De Tott [1784], iii. 261), chap. lxviii. "The Turks of Macedonia who bear arms are Spahis, Yuruks, and Janissaries. The Spahis are the cavalry formed by the holders of the ziamets and timars, when called on by the government. The Yuruks cultivate their own lands, chiefly in the mountainous districts. The Janissaries are the garrisons of the fortified places, among

rooted up to save the state, it is doubtful whether the core and life of the state were not rooted up with them.

Orchan could well afford to stay his hand from conquest for twenty years, when those years were the first years of growth to the company of the Janissaries,—the years in which its strange and formidable character was clearly determined and strongly impressed on it, and the spirit breathed into its silently forming elements, which was to be the gage of continual victory and wide dominion, and which centuries were not to extinguish. But though the Ottoman frontier was not advanced, Orchan was by no means an unconcerned spectator of the scene of ruin and dissolution which the Greek Empire beyond the Straits presented. Since the Ottomans had defeated the Byzantine Emperor at Pelekanon, the pedant courtier, his master's trusted favourite, who lost, and who has left us the story of that disgraceful day, had become by his intrigues the usurping partner, and then the open rival, of his master's infant son. Cantacuzene warred with a Palæologus for the Empire, as the Palæologi had been in the habit of fighting for it among themselves. They were not content to burn and destroy, by the hands of their own soldiers, what was left to the Empire of its towns and cultivated districts; they invited to their aid the Turkish hordes

whom are generally enrolled the greater part of the heads of families engaged in trade or manufactures, or who have landed property in the neighbouring plains."—Leake (in 1806), *Northern Greece*, iii. 249.

from Bithynia, the Turkish pirates from Smyrna and the coasts of Caria and the Troad; and in return for such uncertain and precarious assistance as they were willing to render, the competing Christian emperors gave them free license to pillage and enslave throughout their provinces, and formally consented to the demand that the robbers should have a market for their Christian slaves in the capital of Eastern Christendom.[1] Cantacuzene is not ashamed to dwell with self-complacent conceit—for in such a man it can hardly be called pride—on the close intimacy which continued till death between himself and a Turkish chief of freebooters; and celebrates what he calls the good faith and constant honour of his Mahometan friend, who was a useful counterpoise to Cantacuzene's enemies, but whose barbarian swarms wasted Cantacuzene's land, and swept off his subjects as ruthlessly as other Turks. Cantacuzene found a romantic friend in the Emir of Smyrna;[2] but in the Emir of Brusa, as we learn from his own unblushing narrative, the heir of Augustus and Constantine was glad to find a son-in-law. Orchan demanded, as the price of allowing his horsemen to ride and ravage in the name of Cantacuzene, rather than of Palæologus, that Cantacuzene should give him his daughter Theodora.[3] Cantacuzene took counsel with his friend,

[1] Finlay, pp. 552, 553, 572; Gibbon, viii. 63. [2] *Ibid.* p. 60.

[3] Finlay, p. 572.—"His throne was only supported by his close alliance with his son-in-law, Orkhan, *whose troops were allowed to use the Greek territories as a hunting-ground, to supply their slave-markets.*"

the Emir of Smyrna, and followed his urgent advice to enlist, by any means, so important an auxiliary on his side. When in after years, a deposed emperor, and a monk in one of the convents of Athos, he looked back on his schemes and deeds of ambition, and wrote their story, he had the heart to perpetuate the minute and pompous ceremonial with which his royal daughter, the daughter of the Emperor of the East, was delivered over to her Turkoman and infidel husband. Pompous and minute as the ceremonial was, one thing was left out—there was wanting even the form of Christian marriage.[1] So low had the purple of the Cæsars fallen; so rapidly had the fortunes mounted of the son of the shepherd "free-booter of the Bithynian hills." The bride of Orchan's youth was the Greek chief's wife, whom his father's riders had carried off in a border fray. Fifty years had passed; and now the bride of his old age was another Christian damsel, the noblest of her country, given to him publicly in the face of the imperial city, with all the magnificence and formality of the most ceremonious court in Christendom.[2] And yet this loathsome and infamous sacrifice was not enough to purchase even a respite. Two years after his marriage, Orchan paid a solemn visit to the Byzantine court,

[1] Gibbon, viii. 63.

[2] Von Hammer, i. 128.—"Between his first and his last marriage a half century had passed of conquest; and in the interval, the Grecian wife was changed from the ravished Castellan's bride into the emperor's daughter, freely bestowed, and delivered to him with the pomp of a state ceremonial."

and nothing was spared to do him honour. But the visit was scarcely over, when picked bands of Ottomans were across the Hellespont, wasting the Thracian cities, sweeping off booty and slaves from the very gates of Constantinople, and encountering in battle the Emperor Cantacuzene himself. When the traders of Genoa, from their fortified factory of Galata, bearded and assailed the Emperor in his own harbour and palace, Orchan without scruple listened to their request for assistance, and, though in a state of profound peace with Cantacuzene, lent his Ottomans, to help them to insult his ally and his kinsman. At last the hollow friendship, which was Cantacuzene's main support on the throne, ceased even to be professed; Orchan negotiated alike with both the rival emperors, and seeing his own interest in keeping alive their quarrel, favoured each by turns, to weaken and destroy the other's power.

At length, at the very close of Orchan's life, the march of Ottoman conquest, which had been suspended for the work of consolidation, took up what had been left off at the fall of Nicomedia and the annexation of Mysia, and resumed its course. The Ottomans, like the other Turks, had long been too well known on European ground; but with the sea between them and their homes in Asia, they had not yet dared to settle there. At last they made the stride which separates ravage from conquest. Othman lived to see Brusa won; Orchan, the conqueror of Brusa for his dying father, reigned till the Hellespont was crossed

and Gallipoli occupied by his son Soleiman. Each saw the first step made in the enterprise which filled the thoughts of his life; but the conquest of a province, which had been the ambition of the father, had swelled into that of an empire, in the plans and meditations of the son.

This great and decisive step, which, to the Greeks of the time, seemed but an ordinary incident in the harassing and insulting warfare to which they had become familiarised and resigned, is felt in its full importance by the Turkish historians; and if the details of their narrative are doubtful and untrustworthy, the Ottomans showed their sense of the event itself, by the legendary, if not fabulous, halo with which they invest it. It is the first occasion on which they think it worth while to record the passage of their countrymen into Europe. Soleiman, the son of Orchan, say the Turkish chroniclers, was spending the night—a fine moonlight night—among the ruins of what had been Cyzicus. His fancy was moved and his spirit awed by the sight of abandoned grandeur, of which the history was unknown to him; as he gazed on broken columns, and marble pavements over which the waves rippled, and triumphal arches reflected on the waters, he thought he saw one of the ancient cities which the genii had built for Solomon, with Persepolis and Tadmor; he believed himself among the palaces of Balkis, the Queen of the South, and the wonderful magnificence of the days of old, when the true believers were helped by the hand of

Heaven. Again he looked and the radiance of the moon upon the sea seemed to stretch away to the Thracian hills, and to be like a silver band joining his lands to the lands of the infidel—Asia to Europe. He remembered the dream of Othman, and how there the full moon was the presage and opening of his ancestor's vision of empire. Again the moon was shining, and he seemed to hear in the murmur of the waves a call to follow where the radiant path across the waters pointed. Then, says the legend, his resolution was taken to bind the two continents together by the might of the Ottomans; and it was confirmed by the old warriors, whom his father had given him as counsellors in the government of his province. That same night two of them—Adsché-beg and Ghazi Fazil—rowed across the strait in a shallop, and brought back with them a Greek prisoner, who told them that the fort of Tzympe, a short distance from Gallipoli, was left without a garrison. Soleiman cut ox-hides into strips, and with them bound together trunks of trees into two rafts; thirty-nine of his bravest companions, and himself the fortieth—the legend keeps the favourite number, like the forty companions of Othman, and the forty robbers of the Arabian tale—trusted themselves on the rafts, and on the following night were ferried across the Hellespont. Among them were the great Ottoman heroes of the time, with the renegade Greek chief of Brusa, Evrenos, the future conqueror of Greece and Macedonia, who was to grow gray as the most renowned

among the captains of Amurath and Bajazet. The defenders of Tzympe were abroad in the fields, gathering in their harvest beneath the moonlight; a dung heap had been left, raised against the rampart, and over it the Ottomans mounted. They were followed next day by a large body in barks, and before three days were over 3000 Turks had crossed to Tzympe, and held it fast. This crossing of the Hellespont is fixed by the Ottoman historians in the year 1356.

Cantacuzene was at the very moment asking the help of Orchan against the rival Greek Emperor. Orchan sent Soleiman himself; he beat back the Servian and Bulgarian allies of Palæologus, and then swept the valley of the Hebrus on his own account. But within a few months, a fearful catastrophe of nature threw open still wider to the Ottomans the gates of the Greek Empire. While Cantacuzene and Orchan were negotiating about the restitution of Tzympe, an earthquake laid in ruins the cities of the Chersonese, and shattered their ramparts. It was winter; torrents of rain were followed by snow and piercing frosts; and in the midst of desolation and death from the fury and bitterness of the elements, the Ottoman robbers, "like evening wolves," came rushing in through the riven walls, to plunder, and now to occupy the ruined cities. In this way they seized Gallipoli, while their chiefs were treating about the ransom of Tzympe.

It would have been surprising, if anything but force could have wrung back from the wily Ottoman

a prize of which he knew so well the value. But his answer to the remonstrances of his father-in-law and ally Cantacuzene, is characteristic of the grave and ironical perfidy which soon becomes one of the distinguishing marks of his family and race. Cantacuzene, he said, had no right to demand back Gallipoli, and the neighbouring towns of the Chersonese, "for it was not the force of arms which had given them to the Ottomans, but the earthquake." Cantacuzene, according to some historians, was unable to pay the ransom which the Turk demanded. But it is plain that no ransom would have paid the price of that secure lodgment in Europe, which the opportunity of the moment had given him, and which was obviously the next step, whenever it could be taken, in the manifest policy of Orchan's house.

The operations of modern war have but lately reminded us of the importance of Gallipoli as a military position, where the safety of Constantinople is at stake. Its importance in the times of Orchan might have been less, if the maritime superiority of the Greeks, which at this period seems clear over the light Turkish barks, had been turned to account by resolute and able leaders. But in the hands that ruled Byzantium, it was useless. Fifty years before, the Catalan Grand Company had seized on Gallipoli, and from this commanding stronghold, joined to the land only by a narrow isthmus, and open to the sea, had sallied forth at will, to ravage the Greek provinces, to help or to overthrow an emperor, and to insult the

Imperial City at its gates. The system and the success of the Catalans, in this as in other instances, were obviously not lost on the Ottomans, who possessed their valour and their internal discipline, with far more of settled and formidable purpose. At Gallipoli they held a post impregnable to the Greeks, which at once secured the ferry between Europe and Asia, and gave them the mastery of the approaches to the harbour of Constantinople. The same system of waiting and watching at the gates, which had given Brusa, Nicæa, and Nicomedia into their hands, was now applied on a larger scale to the reduction of the capital of the Empire.

In Gallipoli Soleiman settled a colony of Asiatics, —Turks and Arabs,—and divided the lands of the Chersonese among the warriors who had been, according to the Turkish legend, the companions of his nocturnal voyage across the Hellespont. Many of them left their names to the places where they resided, and the tombs of some of these heroes of Islam make Gallipoli a venerable spot. But it is still more sacred in the eyes of Ottomans, as possessing the tomb of Soleiman himself. He died, shortly after leading his people into Europe, not in the battle-field, or from disease, but because his horse stumbled, while he was flying his hawks in a field near Bulair. He was buried where he fell, by a mosque which he had built, within view of the sea. His grave marks the northern entrance of the Hellespont, as that of Protesilaus does the southern. "For a hundred years," says Von

Hammer, "he was the only Ottoman prince who lay buried in European earth; and his tomb continually invited the races of Asia to perform their pilgrimage to it with the sword of conquest. Of all the hero-tombs which have been hitherto mentioned in connection with Ottoman history, there is none more renowned, or more visited, than that of the second Vizier of the empire, the fortunate Crosser of the Hellespont, who laid the foundation of the Ottoman power in Europe." The atmosphere of legend still environed his memory in death. Ottoman story-tellers related to enthusiastic hearers, and Ottoman historians gravely repeat the tale, how when a mighty Christian armament landed near the holy tomb at Bulair, the hero Soleiman reappeared, leading a host of heavenly warriors, radiant with light and mounted on white horses, to the aid of his hard-pressed countrymen, and utterly destroyed the invaders. But the learned and impartial German, who has collected the Ottoman records, is at the pains to inform us, that the armament, the battle, and the victory, are irreconcilable with the more authentic facts of history.

Orchan survived his son Soleiman scarcely a year; he died in the year 1359. With Orchan and Soleiman, the lawgiver and the champion, seems to end the age of the heroes in the Ottoman annals; with the conquests of Amurath, these annals enter into the domain of European history.

Then it was known why Orchan had held back so long. When his son Amurath took up his father's

work, it was seen at once, in terrible clearness, what a change had come over the Ottoman invaders. In that significant and eventful pause in their advance, the rude freebooters, who prowled in conscious and patient helplessness round the impregnable ramparts of Nice and Brusa, content if, after ten years of untired watching at their gates, they might surprise or weary out their prey, had become transformed into self-reliant and ready soldiers, able for all the works of victorious warfare; for swift and continued and enduring conquest. With Amurath begins, rapid and sudden, the irresistible outburst of Turkish power. Their roving bands, indeed, had long well known the routes in neighbouring Europe; they were familiar with the towns and cities of Thrace and Macedonia, under whose walls they had often swept in insulting security. They had watered their horses in the Strymon and the Axius, in the Morava and the Danube; but they had come and gone. But when, in the first year of Amurath, their squadrons issued from the fastness of the Chersonese, along the narrow isthmus of Bulair, and through the towns which Soleiman had already occupied at its outlets and approaches, they entered to remain; they were come this time to divide and take possession. All the harassing forays of their predecessors are forgotten, compared with this great and determined advance, which in less than thirty years, for the second time in history, established an Asiatic power in Europe; and which made the Greek Emperor a vassal to a

Mahometan chieftain, for all that was left to him of his renowned empire, the city and outskirts of Constantinople.

The intrigues of the rival Turks of Karaman detained Amurath for a moment in Asia; but the rebels of Galatia were soon put down, and the great fortified city of Angora, reputed by Ottoman writers one of the strongest in the line of Turkish fortresses from Buda to Van, was secured as a bulwark to the eastern limits of the Ottomans. Then he at once crossed into Thrace, where his brother's grave seemed the call to conquest and to be its pledge. There was no delay in seizing the towns that remained untaken, in the vicinity and on the approaches of the Chersonese. From them he marched boldly into the heart of what had been the Greek Empire. Amurath threw himself on the great military road which joins Constantinople to the Upper Danube, and so to the countries of the west: the towns upon its line were successively and swiftly occupied; while another body, under the veteran renegade Evrenos, and another of Orchan's old captains, pushed up the valley of the Hebrus. Didymotichon, the modern Demotica, the future prison of Charles XII., was taken; and Amurath, pleased with its position, and with the capture of a favourite residence of some of the Byzantine emperors, thought it worthy of being selected for the site of his first European palace. But a grander capital than Demotica was within his grasp. The Ottoman powers by the Hebrus, and the great north road, were con-

verging on Adrianople. Hadji Ilbeki, the conqueror of Demotica, had ridden that year up to the walls of that great city, and boldly maintained the possibility of its capture. The thought of the greatness of the prize seems to have made even Amurath hesitate; but the council of war was held, and it was resolved to venture. The Greek governor of Adrianople risked and lost a battle outside the gates of the city, the first and last which the Greeks dared with Amurath. The Greeks fled, and Adrianople surrendered. In Amurath's first campaign in Europe, before he had been two years on the throne, the rival capital to Constantinople, lying opposite its very gates, and barring the approaches from western Christendom, came without resistance into his hands.

From this time, till Amurath's last field, no check stopped him in his steady progress in the occupation of what has since his time been European Turkey. Along the great north-western road, the flame leapt from point to point, along its stations and towns, from Adrianople to Philippopolis, from thence over the passes of Hæmus to Sofia, from Sofia to Naissus, on the edge of the Servian kingdom, and within a few marches of Belgrade. Westward, along the old Egnatian way, Evrenos pushed onwards, and prepared the way to Greece; he halted only after he had crossed the Axius, at the Macedonian town of Vardar; the castles and strongholds, which had not yielded to him on his first passage, were one by one mastered afterwards, and a line of posts in the

mountain passes and on the coast secured; Serres, and the fruitful valley of the Upper Strymon, on one side, and the great city of Thessalonica on the other, at last, after several years, completed the Turkish conquests over the southern shore of Thrace. Nor were the Turkish invaders come this time merely to conquer. At the farthest points of their progress, they at once began to build and to endow, as the permanent occupants of the soil, not only for themselves, but for their posterity. At Vardar, Evrenos was the founder of richly-endowed caravanserais and public kitchens for the poor; at Philippopolis, Lalashahin left his memorial, in a noble bridge of stone two bow-shots in length, and wide enough for the passage of two carriages abreast; and gave a large number of slaves, for whose sustenance he provided, to keep it in repair. The towns on each side of the great Adrianople road were captured; and thus the circle of Turkish occupation round Constantinople was completed and drawn closer, and the emperors were isolated, at least by land, from their ancient realm. In due time, Hadji Ilbeki pushed up the valley of the Tundscha, which comes down from the Balkan to join the Hebrus at Adrianople. The towns on the pleasant southern slopes of the mountains, Iamboli and Aidos, and Sizeboli on the sea, were taken. Then the great dividing range was crossed. The Ottomans threaded from the south the defiles which lead to the plains of Bulgaria and the banks of the Danube. Then first, names are heard of which have

been heard so often, and with so much interest, since; then first we hear of the mountain-nest of Schumla, which has so often sheltered the Ottoman armies; and at the end of Amurath's reign, we hear of the Ottomans round the towns of the Lower Danube, from Nicopolis to Rustschuk and Hirsova, and of the first siege, recorded by history, of Silistria.

It was not with Greeks that the Ottomans disputed for the Greek Empire. *They* struck no blow—princes or people—for their land and homes: the invasion roused indignation and resistance, but not in them. Amurath found antagonists; but they were competitors for the inheritance of the empire, and the prize of Eastern Europe, jealous that he should forestall them. His battles on Greek soil were fought with other foreigners, who wrangled with him for the helpless carcase of the Byzantine dominions. It was the Sclavonic nations from the Danube and the Drave, Servians, Wallachians, and Bulgarians, who met him in his first field, and his last, and who struggled for supremacy in the plains of Thrace, with the Turkomans from the Oxus and the Caspian.

In the weakness of the Greek Empire, a rival Christian state had insensibly risen on its western border, as the Ottomans had grown up on the east. Stephen Dushan, a politician, a legislator, and a warrior, had laid the foundation of a powerful kingdom amid the wooded mountains of Servia: he had established his authority and his influence over the multitude of local hereditary nobles, by whom his

race, like the rest of the Sclavonians, were ruled; he was received as a deliverer by the Bosnian chiefs, as a protector by the republic of Ragusa; his standard was followed by the warlike tribes from Albania; he was obeyed in Arta and Belgrade, in Macedonia and Bulgaria; and he assumed the name and the ensigns of a Roman Cæsar, the tiara, and the globe and cross. Stephen Dushan left behind him a great national name; but an unfinished work. He lighted up a high ambition in the aspiring race whom he had ruled; but he died too soon, and the nation itself was too immature, for the consolidation of the loose and refractory elements of Servian power. Servia had led the Sclavonians in challenging the advance of the Ottomans, but with no fortunate issue. From the first, the superiority of the Ottomans declared itself; and the votive Styrian chapel of Mariazell, the most sacred place of pilgrimage in Austria, preserved the memory of the escape of Louis of Hungary, when he fled on the banks of the Hebrus from the Turkish scimitar, in the first encounter of the confederate Sclavonians with the lieutenants of Amurath, though the Styrian legends of the sanctuary itself have changed the defeat into a victory. Thus early, though unsuccessfully, began the fierce, long struggle, between the Ottomans and the nations which found their rallying point in the house of Austria. But the part and position of the Greek Emperor was a very different one. John Palæologus, after the first burst of Turkish conquest, begged for and obtained peace

at Constantinople, while Amurath overran the rest of his dominions; a peace which the Greek only on one occasion attempted to interrupt; when he went to Italy to offer the submission of the Eastern Church as the price of a new crusade. In this he failed; an ignominious arrest at Venice for debt, which was paid by the sale or pawn of the church plate at Constantinople, detained him a while; and then he returned, to offer his services against the enemies of the Ottomans, and to spend the remainder of his reign as the humble and resigned dependent on the good pleasure of Amurath. His degraded and pitiable vassalage, as well as a terrible earnest of that merciless cruelty which ran in the blood of the Ottoman house, are shown in the story of the conspiracy against their fathers, of his son Andronicus with Saudchi, the eldest son of Amurath. Amurath, when he heard of it, summoned the Emperor to prove his own innocence at the Sultan's court; and when John had, without difficulty, convinced his master that he could not have been a party to such perilous designs, Amurath called on him to join him in arms against their insurgent sons, and in a compact to blind them if they were captured. The rebels were overthrown; Amurath, say the chroniclers, approached their camp at night, and called aloud to their Ottoman soldiers to leave them. The soldiers heard once more the voice which had been wont to lead them in battle, and could not resist its fascination. The rebellious sons were taken. Amurath redeemed his pledge in full measure; he first

put out his son's eyes—then, when he had discharged his promise, he slew him. Andronicus was also blinded; but it was done imperfectly, and Amurath reproached his dependent for his weak compassion for his son. He himself was guilty of no such mercy for the Greek associates of Andronicus. From the banks of the Hebrus, he looked on calmly and unmoved, while the captive nobles were thrown, tied in pairs, into the river, from the battlements of Demotica. His composure was only disturbed by a laugh of scorn, when a hare, the emblem to the Ottomans of the Greek race, crossed his view, pursued by dogs, and he saw in the circumstance a coincidence, which moved his mirth, with the bloody scene which his war hounds were enacting before him. Yet Amurath was proud enough to be magnanimous. Manuel, the emperor's second son, who had tried to raise the standard of resistance to the Turks in Macedonia, when he found every place of refuge, even his father's palace, closed against him by the terror of the Sultan's name, boldly threw himself on the chance of his mercy, and appeared before him at Brusa. Amurath spared him. He pardoned his past misconduct, thus is their interview described, and warned him, that on his mended behaviour would depend the mending of his fortunes in Europe; and then he sent him to his father, and gave the Emperor leave to open the gates of his capital to his son, on condition that he would guard him carefully. It is the historians of the Greek Empire who are our authority for these features of its decline.

Amurath inherited the organising spirit of his father Orchan. The countries he occupied were carved out into military tenures, the smaller *Timars*, and the larger *Siamets*, for the horsemen who had come across with him from Asia, and the bases laid of that great feudal system, which so long and so inexhaustibly fed the Ottoman armies, and riveted their power over the subject races, while it prevented the conquerors from identifying themselves with the soil, or feeling themselves more than, as it were, its lessees and tenants. The privileges and the service of this feudal militia, were defined and regulated; and in the place of the old Moslem colours under which the warriors of Islam had been wont to fight—the yellow of the Prophet himself, the green the Fatimites, the white of the Ommiades, the black of the Abbassides,—the *Spahis* of the house of Othman reared that blood-red banner. so well known and so long feared in Christendom. In the service of the camp, a carriage train was organised of Christian followers, who, in consideration of the menial and burdensome duties to which they were bound, were exempt from tribute. The old law of the Koran was remembered and revived, which enacted a fifth of all the spoil, and a fifth of the price of every slave, for the use of the prince. A peace of six years was interposed in Amurath's conquests, and gave leisure, not only for the erection of mosques and palaces and baths in Adrianople, his new European capital, but for perfecting the military system, to which everything else was subordinate. The wily old man,

Black Halil, who had suggested to Orchan the institution of the Janissaries, was in high power and confidence for twenty-seven of the thirty years of Amurath's reign; and the office of Grand Vizier, which he bore for eighteen years, under the title of Haireddin Pasha, never went out of his family till after the fall of Constantinople. Even the Greek historians were impressed with his keen and far-sighted character, and record how carefully he was wont to impress upon Amurath, the necessity of preparing and proportioning his means and instruments for the high aim which he had before him. With such a counsellor, Amurath developed and matured the outlines of policy which Orchan had left him; and the men whose names are chiefly associated with his conquests, were mostly aged warriors, but energetic and able in their old age, who had passed their manhood as the servants of Orchan.

But it was not in Europe only, that the Ottoman power was advancing with such vast strides. In Asia Minor, it rapidly absorbed two more of the smaller states, which had risen from the ruins of the Seljouks. The Emir of Kermian, the ancient Phrygia, had to surrender his province as a marriage gift with his daughter to Amurath's son Bajazet; the Emir of Hamid, the old Pisidia, had to part with his by a forced sale. There was only one among these principalities which could pretend to measure itself with the Ottomans. The princes of Karaman occupied the plains of Iconium, the rugged masses of Taurus, and the shores of the Cilician sea. They had before

shown jealousy of their rivals of the north-west. Amurath was provoked by their intrigues; and their submission was not timely enough to stop the march of an army which he had collected for their chastisement, from his European dominions and allies, as well as from Asia. In 1386, on the field of Iconium, the Ottomans first tried their strength in a pitched battle against their Turkish brethren. The array of the Ottoman host on that decisive day is recorded, as the precedent, which was ever after followed in their many future battles. The feudal cavalry from Asia, as the fight was on their own ground, occupied the post of honour, the right wing—the troops from Europe the left—an order which was reversed when European ground was the scene of battle. In the first line of the centre,—covered by a cloud of irregular skirmishers on foot, the *Azabs*,—stood, for the first time that history records, the "new soldiers" raised from the Christian children in Black Halil's schools, the trained infantry of the Janissaries. Behind them was the post of the Sultan and Grand Vizier, surrounded by the squadrons of the regular cavalry of the guard, the paid *Spahis* and *Silihdars*. The Beglerbegs of Roumelia and Anatolia, the supreme military chiefs of the forces of Europe and Asia, commanded each on his own wing; but on this occasion, the Sultan's two sons, Bajazet and Yacoub, were joined with them in command. The Karamanians were utterly routed; and on the field, the title of Vizier, and the distinguishing banner of the three horse tails,

were first conferred as a dignity of military honour, on Timurtash, the Beglerbeg of Roumelia, and the hero of the fight of Iconium. Amurath humbled, but was prevailed on to spare, the emir and the state of Karaman; but a storm was gathering behind him, and he had again to summon all his powers, both in Europe and Asia, to meet the danger which was once more threatening from the banks of the Danube.

The Servians and their allies had been subdued, and Amurath had compelled Servian auxiliaries to help him against the Turks of Karaman; but the decisive trial of strength had not yet come, and the absence and occupation of Amurath in Asia, and perhaps the smart of Ottoman superiority, tempted and provoked them to measure themselves again, and for the last time, against their terrible competitor. Lazar, King of Servia, the son of Stephen, gathered together the armies of the confederate Sclavonians from the gulf of Arta and the Croatian highlands, to the plains of the Theyss, and the mouths of the Danube. Seven tongues were spoken in his camp. There were Wallachians from beyond the Danube—Poles and Hungarians from beyond the Carpathians. The Tartars of the Dobruscha had been induced to revolt from the Ottomans; and the tribes which now furnish the fiercest soldiers wherever the Turkish power requires the most daring and unscrupulous ferocity, the Albanian and Bosnian mountaineers, were then banded together with the kindred nations of Bulgaria and Servia, which have not, like them,

accepted the faith with the yoke of their conquerors. The confederates hung on the edges of the Ottoman conquest, and defeated the Ottoman armies; yet Amurath seemed hardly to heed them. He was busy with the affairs of his newly-acquired Asiatic provinces. There he was occupied in celebrating at Brusa, with pompous ceremony, the circumcision of three of his grandchildren, and his own marriage, and that of his two sons, with Byzantine princesses. At last he moved. The forces of Asia Minor were once more poured across the Hellespont. With one wing of the army, his Grand Vizier, the son of Black Halil, crossed the Balkan, smote Bulgaria, and made it from that day a Turkish province. Then, through the rugged water-courses and intricate passes, in the heart and centre of the Sclavonic peninsula, where the mountain chains of Thrace and Macedonia are knotted together with the prolongations of the Dacian and Illyrian hills, Amurath pushed forward to seek the Servians. Old Evrenos, the apostate chief of Brusa, came back from a pilgrimage to Mecca, which he had just performed at the close of life, in testimony of his zeal for his second faith, to lend the Ottomans once more the renown of his formidable name, and to lead their vanguard. At Kossova, the "Ousel's Field," where the borders of all the great Sclavonic provinces meet, and where all their races were represented in the field, the armies joined. Of that stoutly-contested battle, the issue was not doubtful, though a great price was paid for it by the

conqueror. The life of the first invader of Europe was exacted, as the sacrifice due from the Ottomans for their first great European victory—but in that victory, the liberty of the Sclavonic tribes was struck down for centuries, and an omen given, of but too faithful presage, of the way in which Christian and Moslem were to meet afterwards in many a bloody field.

The histories and legends of both nations dwell upon, and perhaps exaggerate or overcolour, the remembrances of this eventful fight. On the eve of the battle, say the Turkish chroniclers, the mind of the stout-hearted Amurath for a while misgave him. The banded Christian host, now that he had found it, barred his way with numbers greatly superior to his own. His army had marched far, and through rough and difficult ways; and, now that the die was to be cast, the only chance left him was victory,—for behind him were the defiles of Rhodope and Hæmus, and all around an unfriendly country. The Ottoman chiefs were divided in their counsels as to the method of attack, and night found them still disagreed. With the night came a violent wind, which drove the dust across the plain in stifling clouds into the faces of the Ottomans. Meanwhile, in the Christian camp, the proposal to take their enemies at disadvantage during the night was rejected, for fear, it was urged, lest under the cover of darkness any of them should escape. All the night long Amurath spent in prayer, that, if he might not con-

quer, he might at least have the privilege of dying a martyr for Islam. With the morning came a change: the clouds of dust which had swept over the field gave place to a soft rain; the view was cleared, and the Ottomans could see their opponents. Drawn up in the same order as at Iconium, they closed on the Christian army. The fight was obstinate and bloody: the iron mace of Prince Bajazet smote fierce and fast, and, where he led, the yielding Ottomans rallied, and the Christians were scattered before the tempest of his attack; but the fortune of the day was long doubtful and threatening to Amurath, before their overthrow was completed and irretrievable. It had been almost accomplished when, from the heaps of the slain, a Servian soldier started forth, and crying out that he had a secret message for Amurath, burst through the guards and orderlies to his person. Amurath suffered him to approach; the Servian bowed to kiss his foot, and, as he raised himself, stabbed Amurath mortally. A man of prodigious strength and speed, the murderer sprang forth again through the circle of guards; three times his pursuers came up with him, and three times he shook them off; the fourth time, faint with his wounds, he was overpowered, and died under their swords. But Amurath had still strength to direct what remained to be accomplished of his victory. It was achieved while he yet lived. Lazar, the Servian king, was brought in prisoner to his tent; and, while he was dying himself, Amurath ordered him to be slain, and

looked on while he was put to death. Conqueror and conquered, each gazed with fierce triumph on the last moments of the other, and carried with them the certainty of his rival's fate.

Such are the Ottoman accounts of the fight of Kossova and the death of Amurath. The Servian legends and Greek historians—who attribute the loss of the battle to the panic and flight of the Bosnians, after they had successfully met and beaten back the first shock of the Ottomans—give a different version of the deed of Milosch Kobilovitsch, the soldier who avenged his nation's liberty on the conqueror who had struck it down. Milosch and Wuk Brancowich, say the Servian legends, had married the two daughters of King Lazar, and the sisters had quarrelled about the merit of their respective husbands. Brancowich, provoked by his own jealousy and the complaints of his wife, accused Milosch of treasonable correspondence with the Turks. On the eve of the battle, King Lazar was pledging his nobles to the morrow's good fortune in the *Stravitza*, the silver goblet which he used; when he came to Milosch he passed him the goblet, but reminded him that his good name was not untainted by suspicion. "Thanks, O King, for the *Stravitza*," said Milosch; "to-morrow shall prove my truth." In the morning, before the battle began, Milosch rode into the camp of the Ottomans as a deserter; and when he was brought into Amurath's tent, to kiss his foot, Milosch overturned his seat and dealt him his death-wound. He rushed forth and

reached the swift horse which was waiting to carry him back to the Christian camp, but he had not time to mount before the sabres of the Janissaries hewed him down. The Turks then began the attack. But it was not till the evening, when King Lazar was brought in to die in the tent of his expiring enemy, that he learnt how Milosch Kobilovitsch had redeemed his pledge. With the Servians he is a patriot and an avenging hero; with the Ottomans an assassin, whose crime was afterwards made the pretext of the insulting ceremonial which obliged the ambassadors of Christian powers to approach the Sultan with their arms held by attendant chamberlains. Yet even the Turks seem to have felt a kind of involuntary and admiring interest in the daring and strength which was so fatal to their great leader. On the plain of Kossova, where a chapel marks the place where Amurath died, the Turks have set up three great stones, at intervals of fifty ells, to point out the spots where Milosch thrice sprang through the crowds of his pursuers; and in the old armoury at Constantinople are still shown the arms and the trappings of the Servian champion and his war-horse.

Such was the first stage of that military empire which Orchan had planned for his house and race, and for which he had so patiently prepared. From the time when Amurath "the Victorious" burst upon the Byzantine realm, it was clear that no power in the east of Europe was a match in battle for the fierceness and the long-practised discipline which was

found alone among the Ottomans,—as there was no dynasty or state which aimed so high in its policy, and was filled with such confident and resolute enthusiasm of conquest. But the mounting fortunes and the strength of the new state were disclosed with more formidable certainty amid the splendours, and still more, amid the vicissitudes of the reign of his successor Bajazet. Bajazet met at Nicopolis, not Asiatics, or Greeks, or Sclavonians, but the choicest and proudest chivalry of the West; and he trampled them down with an overthrow more humiliating and more cruel than that of Kossova. Till his last fatal field no check suspended the proud and prosperous sweep of his victorious armies, from Widdin to the Morea, from Smyrna and Sinope to the Euphrates. Yet the victory of Nicopolis, and the ancient empire of the east in Europe and Asia once again united beneath his feet, are less striking proofs of the vigour of the Ottoman state than the disasters of Angora. Few eastern dynasties, few nations anywhere in the outset of their career could have so endured the shock and strain of that memorable casting down of human pride. Bajazet himself became one of the household instances in all men's mouths of the instability of the loftiest fortune. His power seemed to break in pieces and dissolve, its instruments and its seats were swept away under the hoofs of the Tartar horses. And when the tempest which had carried him along with it had passed over, Ottoman was ranged against Ottoman, Janissary against Spahi, while his sons

tore among themselves what remained of the Ottoman dominions, and fought with one another for its ruins. Yet out of this wreck of public calamity and domestic war the institutions of Orchan emerged unimpaired in form and unaltered in spirit; the tenacious and elastic strength of his race rapidly recovered and collected itself; and from the confusion and disasters of that house, which seemed not only beaten down but divided against itself, arose in terrible energy and relentless purpose the awful form of Mahomet the Conqueror.

A primitive and severe simplicity of habits had hitherto marked the Ottoman sovereigns. Unscrupulous in policy, reckless of blood, and fierce in their scorn of those whom they had destined for their slaves, they were yet largely imbued with what religious tempers the Koran can infuse; it speaks much of kindness and mercy to the needy, and of rigorous justice even to the stranger; and they had gained renown even among their enemies for both. Nor, while displaying magnificence in their public constructions and foundations, had they yet been tempted to leave their ancestral homeliness, and copy the barbaric gorgeousness of Oriental state. Once only a whim of Amurath prompted him to add a slight ornament to the severe plainness of his attire. At the plunder of a town he discovered and exposed the device of one of his soldiers, to secrete a golden cup, by placing it on his head, and covering it with his head-dress; Amurath chose to be amused at the

trick, and in his merriment to imitate the soldier, and set the fashion of wearing a gold embroidered cap beneath the white linen of his turban. And his illiterate rudeness, ostentatiously affected, if it was not real, is still commemorated in the *Tughra* or sign manual of his more polished successors—the Arabic letters of their name and style are interwoven into a rude outline of the impression of a human hand, in remembrance of the way in which Amurath, like the shepherd kings of Tartary, the Mongol conquerors, and Timour, ratified his treaties, by dipping his palm in the ink, and leaving the print of it on the instrument. But under Bajazet, the effect was seen of unbroken and marvellous success, of increasing wealth and strength, on natures still steeped in the ignorance, and instinct with the savage and untamed wildness, of the steppes of Central Asia. The pride and the dazzling pomp, the cold deliberate ferocity, the monstrous lust of blood, the deep insolent perfidy, the foul and unnameable sensuality, thinly disguised under a veil of grave and manly courtesy, which have marked almost every Ottoman sovereign, and certainly every period of Ottoman power, appear already in their hateful combination, if not yet in their full proportions, in the court of Bajazet.

"The reign of Bajazet Ilderim, 'the Thunderbolt,'" says Von Hammer, "begins, like the history of the world, with fratricide. Scarcely had his father breathed forth his spirit, than Bajazet ordered his brother to be put to death"—the brother who had

shared with him, the day before, the perils and the toil of the hard-fought field of Kossova. "He did this," says the official historiographer of the Ottoman Empire, Seaddedin, who proclaims it his duty only to record the facts which set forth the honour of the noble house of Othman—he did this "in consideration of the text of the Koran, '*Disturbance is worse than putting to death:*'—in consideration of the evil example given by his brother Saudschi of conspiracy and rebellion, that such an example might not find an imitator:—and in consideration of the example which ought to be followed, of God, who is alone and without a rival; wherefore also the shadow of God upon earth, the Ruler of the Faithful, ought like God, to govern, without companionship and without rivalry, on his throne." "The reasons which influenced Bajazet," continues Von Hammer, "were found so weighty by the succeeding sultans, that his example was followed as a rule; and afterwards, in the legislation of Mahommed the Conqueror, the murder of the brethren of the Sultan was publicly proclaimed to be the law of the kingdom."

The vassalage of the Servians, and other Sclavonian tribes, which followed on the battle of Kossova, gave Bajazet an undisputed pre-eminence in the East; but the rout and massacre of Nicopolis at once spread his name and terror throughout Europe. In the most disastrous days of the Crusades the pride of the nobles of the West had not been taught so terrible a lesson by the Infidels of Asia. A momentary pause

in the confusions of the Great Schism, and the civil wars of France, had left them free to seek the excitement of an Eastern adventure. At Pentecost in 1396, a gay and princely company met at Vienna, whom Sigismund of Hungary, the future emperor of Germany, had invited to accompany him to chastise the hordes which were riding along the Danube, and to sweep them out of Christendom. In it were heard some of the most famous names and noblest titles of France, Burgundy, and Flanders: D'Eu, de la Marche and Bar, belonged to the blood royal of France; St. Pol, De la Trémouille, Sampi, and De Couci, to its most high-born lordly houses; John de Vienne, the Admiral, John Boucicaut, the Marshal of France, were captains renowned in the wars and councils of the West; the men-at-arms and squires whom they brought with them were picked men of the tried and fiery knighthood of their gallant land; at their head was a grandson of France and heir of Burgundy, known then as the Count of Nevers, but afterwards as *Jean sans Peur*,[1] reserved to be the father of mighty princes,—to be the troubler and scourge of his country,—to be able to daunt a council of the Church from condemning the doctrine of tyrannicide, and ruin the greatest theologian of his age, John

[1] When the Count de Nevers was brought before Bajazet, after the Battle of Nicopolis, "disoit-on communement, qu'il y eut un Sarrasin, nommé Nigromancien, devin, ou sorcier, qui dist qu'on le sauvast, et qu'il estoit taillé de faire mourir plus de Chrestiens que le Basac (Bajazet), ny tous ceux de leur loy ne sçauraient faire."—Juvenal des Ursins, 1396.

Gerson, for denouncing it,—and to end and expiate his guilty and blood-stained life, by being himself its victim on the bridge of Montereau. Nor were the noble names of Germany absent. A Hohen-Zollern led knights from the Rhine; the Count Palatine, from Bavaria; Herman of Cilli, from Styria; and with them was the Grand Master of Rhodes, and a numerous company of the Knights of St. John. On St. Michael's eve they met the foes they had come to seek on the Danube. Headstrong and insolent, "despising their enemies and their allies," scorning the caution prompted by Sigismund's dearly-bought experience of Turkish war, confident in their mail of proof and their western spears, they rose up from their wine and debauchery, and the perfidious slaughter of their captives, to look for and ride down the Infidel rabble rout[1] who had terrified the East.

They encountered a well-ordered and well-prepared army, whose warlike and brilliant show equalled their own. A swarm of light-horsemen covered the Ottoman lines, and concealed what they were doing. As the French advanced, the light-horsemen swept off right and left like a dispersing cloud, and disclosed, behind a fence of thickly-planted stakes, which had been fixed under the cover of their skirmishing, a long line of infantry, from whom a storm of arrows poured into the faces of the French cavalry. But through the deadly arrow-flights, through the barrier of sharp and slanting stakes, among which men and

[1] "Cette chiennaille." Mém. de Boucicaut, chap. xxv.

horses were maimed, they pushed on in spite of great loss; then, before their thundering onset and levelled spears, even the Janissaries, who never fled, were broken and overthrown. The first line of their enemies was destroyed, and the horsemen, who had taken refuge behind it, scattered; but the Frenchmen could not yet halt, and a second line of stout and fierce infantry awaited them. As riders and horses, in disorder and out of breath, mounted the crest of a rising ground, they came upon Bajazet, and with him, not on the wreck and remains, but on the masses, fresh and untouched, of the main body of his host. At once, a "forest of lances" closed round the loose array and exhausted strength of that troop of knights. They fought fiercely and terribly in their despair, but they could charge no longer; they were hemmed in, entangled, jammed together, stifled, by the surging throng and press of the storming Turkish squadrons. They were crushed and broken down, says the report of one who saw the scene, "like the iron on the anvil."[1] The Hungarians far behind, and panic-struck, when they saw the French cavalry struggling in the toils,—led also, it is said, by faithless generals, broke and fled. But Sigismund's guards, with the soldiers from Bavaria and Styria, yet formed a strong and formidable body, and advanced to extricate and relieve their comrades. They, too, were at first successful, till a fierce onset on their flank overthrew

[1] Mém. de Boucicaut.

them. Sigismund, when his royal banner was struck down, escaped, with a few companions, by means of a small boat, on the Danube. But the Christian host was no more; and those of the French and German nobles who were not lying on the field, were prisoners in the hands of Bajazet. On the morrow came a more dreadful scene. Bajazet was furious at the massacre of the Turkish captives by the French nobles, and at his losses on the field. Sitting at his tent door, he ordered the whole body of prisoners to be collected from every part of the camp before him. Two of those who were present and escaped, have left behind their remembrances of that day of humiliation and blood.[1] The noble "youths of the Fleur-de-Lys," honoured and high-spirited children of the lineage and royal blood of France, were tied tightly with cords by the "ugly and horrible Saracens," who held them with "hard and rough grasp before the tyrant as he sat." He granted their lives to the Count de Nevers, and twenty-four of his noblest companions, and bade them sit on the ground at his feet. Then he ordered the whole number of the remaining prisoners to be slain before him. They were brought up one by one, or stood in lines, as they were tied; and the club, or the sharp heavy yataghan,[2] passed along

[1] Schildberger and Boucicaut; supposing that the writer of Boucicaut's Memoirs had the account from himself, which is probable. Cf. *Notice sur Boucicaut* (*Collection Michaud et Poujoulat*), ii. 212.

[2] "Grands cousteaux."—Boucicaut.

from head to head. The number of the victims varies, in different accounts, from three hundred to ten thousand; but one of our informants, an eye-witness, the German Schildberger, who was saved by the son of Bajazet for his extreme youth, and returned an old man, to Nuremberg, to write the story of that horrible morning, says, that at sunrise the work of death began, and that when it was stopped, at the entreaties of the Turkish chiefs, wearied and sickened of its horrors, it was already four hours after noon. As Boucicaut, the Marshal of France, approached in the sad procession, and his turn was rapidly drawing near, his eyes met those of the Count de Nevers.[1] The Count cast a piteous look at Bajazet, and joined the fingers of his hands, to signify that Boucicaut was as a brother to him. Bajazet understood the sign, and Boucicaut was spared to share the count's captivity, and, at last, after losing once more his liberty in a more famous battle than even Nicopolis, to die a prisoner in England.[2] Such was the end of that gallant company. At Pentecost they had met at Vienna. On Christmas night, while the gay court of the King of France, was holding a brilliant festival at Paris, a horseman, booted and spurred, rode into the Hotel St. Pol, and kneeling before the king, delivered the message, that

[1] "Dieu feit, que le Comte de Nevers sur le point que on vouloit ferir sur luy, le va regarder moult piteusement, et le mareschal luy."—Boucicaut.

[2] Gibbon *kills* him at Agincourt; but it is a mistake. Cf. *Notice sur Boucicaut*, p. 212.

the corpses of the French host were lying unburied on the banks of the Danube,[1] and that the few survivors, and among them five princes of his own race, were waiting for their ransom in the prisons of Brusa. France and Flanders were thrown into mourning. And the first of those degrading tributes of money and presents with which the great kings of the West used, from time to time, to deprecate the hostility and feed the insolence of the Turks, was offered at the Porte of Bajazet by the most ancient royal house in Christendom, to redeem the captives of Nicopolis.

For twelve years nothing interrupted the uniform course of Bajazet's conquests. In Asia he finished what his predecessors had begun, the reunion under one sway of all the fragments of the old Seljouk kingdom. The principalities of the coast were finally extinguished. Karaman was conquered, and its chief put to death, and from the shores of Cilicia, Bajazet turned to those of the Euxine, to punish and dispossess the Isfendiars of Kastemuni, the lords of old Paphlagonia, for having harboured the fugitive princes of the Ægean coasts. The shelterers were driven from Sinope and Amasia, as the sheltered had been driven from Smyrna and Ephesus, to seek and raise up an avenger in the midst of that dark tempest of desolating conquest which was raging in the depth of Asia, and in which a mightier than Bajazet was drawing near, amid the ruins of the kingdoms of the

[1] Juvenal des Ursins. 1396.

East. Nothing daunted by the portentous renown of Timour, Bajazet advanced eastwards, till the northern Euphrates became his border. In Europe, Servia and Wallachia were his tributaries. His fortified posts on the Danube were pushed upwards to Widdin, and the Turkish marauders began to feel their way into the unexplored lands of Hungary and Styria. Southwards, he plunged into Thessaly and Greece, offended with the Greek Emperor,[1] or in search of new hunting-grounds; the instigator and guide of his march was a Greek and a churchman, the traitor Bishop of Phocis. This time there was no one to defend Thermopylæ, and Bajazet received the homage of the Greek and Frankish chiefs who ruled in Phocis and Bœotia; while the unwearied Evrenos, that implacable old man against his former race and faith, who, under Amurath, had firmly fixed the Ottoman horsetails on the banks of the Macedonian Axius, now carried them forward over the unguarded Isthmus, to the citadel of Argos and the waters of the Gulf of Coron. In this visitation—for it was not yet a conquest—Athens was not spared: and though the Ottomans for the present retired, they swept off with them a booty of 30,000 slaves, whom they fixed as a colony in Asia, in the same way as they had planted Asiatic colonies at the gates of Constantinople, and in the plains of Thrace.

If Bajazet judged of the nations of the West from his past experience of the spirit and wisdom of his

[1] Finlay; Von Hammer.

Christian foes, it is easy to understand the words of scorn and menace, with which he is said to have dismissed his prisoners.[1] For in the East, he had not only conquered the Christians,—he had forced them to fight his battles against their fellow-Christians, not in the ranks of the Janissaries merely, but under their own banner of the Cross. The charge which finally crushed the Christian host at Nicopolis, was made by Christian troops led by the Christian chief of Servia, the son of him who had been slaughtered in Amurath's tent at Kossova, the grandson of Stephen Dushan, but now the brother-in-law and sworn liege man of Bajazet. For the Palæologi at Constantinople a lower depth of infamy was reserved. It was not only that Bajazet made and unmade Cæsars at his pleasure,—deposed, imprisoned, and then caused the occupant of the throne and the dungeon to change places again; it was not only that he compelled them to receive a Mahomedan kadi, and to allow a Mahomedan mosque to be built within the imperial city,—it was not only that when the emperors had pulled down three famous churches to fill up a gap in the ruined city walls, they submissively obeyed his prohibition to add any new fortifications to Constantinople, and razed to the ground, at his order, what they had just built; it was not only that the smallest disobedience was at once punished by a strict and prolonged blockade—the ignominy of the Greek emperors yet wanted

[1] Cf. Gibbon, chap. lxiv. p. 72.

something to complete it. A single Greek city, which had stood the brunt of more than one fierce storm, still raised itself above the ruins of the empire. Alascher, the ancient Philadelphia, was a great staple of trade, and in the very heart of the Turkish conquests, was still a free town. Bajazet wanted lands and houses, to form the endowment of his new mosque at Adrianople, and he led his army against Philadelphia. The Greek vassal Emperors, with their troops, were with him. It was Manuel, the Greek Emperor, who summoned Philadelphia to receive the Turkish yoke. When Philadelphia resolved to defend its freedom, it was the Greek emperors and Greek soldiers who were appointed, and who undertook, to conduct the siege. Lastly—what would be beyond belief, if a Greek chronicler[1] had not related it—"it was John and Manuel, the Greek emperors, who led the assault against their own city, to deliver it into the hands of the barbarians."[2]

The shadows of ancient greatness still lingered and flitted in its decaying palaces, or wandered, unhonoured suppliants, with their piteous tale of woe and shame, among the courts of the West, or in ludicrous mockery of their fallen state, emulously multiplied themselves in the still shrinking limits of their narrow corner in Thrace; and contending Cæsars reigned, not only at Constantinople, but a score of miles off, at Selymbria. But the substance of power in what was wont to be considered the

[1] Chalcocondylas. [2] Von Hammer, i. 185.

Eastern world, was in Bajazet's court, the Sultan's Gate, at Brusa. Bajazet had traversed the countries from Germany to Armenia, from the Carpathians to Persia and the Syrian desert, and had not yet found a rival; and now he stood, careless of the wild storm which was bursting over Asia, only waiting to arise and be the scourge of the sins and divisions, the scandals and confusions, of Western Christendom. And under him was now seen at Brusa, not only the substance but the show of a power, which served itself of the wealth and strength of many races of men. The Ottomans had long been rapacious, had long been overbearing, had long been insolent: they now exhibited, in rapid and premature development, the display and the corruption of secure prosperity. The profuse and pompous magnificence, and the greediness after money at the expense of public interest and private honour, which are such prominent features in almost all the great men of the Ottomans, began to show themselves in the reign of Bajazet. The son of the great Black Halil, Bajazet's chief minister and friend, was not above receiving a bribe from the Greek Emperor, to give a respite to Constantinople. Bajazet's glory and show in the hunting-field were the wonder of his French captives, the kinsmen of the gayest and of the wealthiest of European princes; but the fiery Bajazet, whose joy seemed the battle, and who owed his fame and his power to his army, left his soldiers without pay at the very crisis of his fortune, and grudged his

treasures to them, even in the moment of peril, with the close-handed and shortsighted thrift of a miserly usurer. We still hear, indeed, of Ottoman justice; but Bajazet's, if we are to judge from the well-known stories [1] which illustrate it, was but the blind ferocity of a provoked barbarian. What is more certain than Bajazet's justice is the licentiousness, of which he gave the example and became the precedent. Bajazet, the first of the Ottoman princes, gave the rein to his wild nature, in pleasure as well as in ambition or revenge. A Moslem prince, he learnt from one of his Christian wives, and added to the sensuality of Asia, the drunken orgies of the West. But this was the least. It was in Bajazet's court that the seeds were sown, which took root so early and grew with the growth of the Ottoman State, of that unnameable system of public and unexampled profligacy,—which remains to this day its burning and characteristic shame, and its incurable curse,—that system of official promotion, which made the infamy of youth the ordinary path to the honours of manhood, and to the first places of the State. It was one of the immediate fruits of the policy which led the Ottomans to recruit their strength in the families of the Christians they had conquered. The tribute of Christian children not only filled the chambers of the Janissaries with recruits, but the Sultan's halls with pages. It is reported that the heinous taint which spread from the Court involved all the orders

[1] See Gibbon, chap. lxiv.; viii. 68.

and classes, by whom the Ottoman State was supported and guided; and that foremost among the corrupt and the corrupting were not merely all-powerful viziers and lawless soldiers, but the grave and solemn teachers and ministers of the Mahomedan law.[1]

"Bajazet sat at Brusa," says one of the Greek chroniclers, in his flowery style, "and the lofty tree of his prosperity was laden with fruit. Nothing of all the things which can give most exquisite enjoyment was wanting to him. Wild beasts of strange shapes, precious metals, and all that God has created most rare for the delight of the eyes, were found in his treasure houses. Choicest slaves, men and women, of fair form and beautiful countenance, stood round him—they were Greeks, Servians, Wallachians, Albanians, Hungarians, Saxons, Bulgarians, Latins—who all sang and made music, each in their own language, however little heart they might have for it. But he sat in the midst of them, and gave himself up without interruption to the enjoyment of soft voluptuousness."[2]

One thing only impeached the perfect splendour of his prosperity. At his very gates, enclosed and straitened by his ample conquests, the ruins and spoils of its worn-out empire, a great and venerable name still claimed the honours of twenty centuries, and maintained its precedence among Eastern princes, by the possession of a royal city which seemed the

[1] Von Hammer, i. 192. [2] Ducas, in Von Hammer, i. 209.

symbol and pledge of Eastern dominion. True, Bajazet had held its keys; he had changed its rulers; he had put it to tribute; he had led forth its Cæsars among his other vassals, against their own less compliant towns. But it was not less true, that the lord still sat at Brusa, and the vassal in the imperial palaces of Constantinople; it was not less true, that the owner of Constantinople was, in the view, not only of Western princes and Western merchants, but of Bajazet's own subjects, the rightful Emperor of the East. And under Bajazet's own eyes that single but splendid relic of greatness, itself more than half the empire, had been transferred without his leave from one to another, by the helpless pretenders to the name of Cæsar; and when one of them could no longer hold it, he devolved his right, and united the rival diadems of Selymbria and Constantinople, on the head of a blind and feeble pensioner of the Ottoman conqueror. The "sick man's heritage," according to the memorable phrase of modern days, invited the hand of his successor. Orchan and Amurath had each successively added a nobler capital to their dominions. It seemed reserved for Bajazet to outshine their exploits and accomplish their work, by raising up the "Gate" and throne of the Turcoman lords of the "Black Castle," within the precincts of the palace of the Cæsars, and by having the weekly prayer of the Moslems recited in their own name, and to the honour of the Arabian Prophet, in the oldest Cathedral in Christendom.

It seemed the triumph reserved for Bajazet; and in the first year of the fifteenth century he prepared to claim it. The blind John of Selymbria reigned in Constantinople, while his cousin and rival Manuel was vainly imploring help among the courts of Europe. Bajazet sent to John: "Not for thy sake, but for my own," he said, "have I cast out thy predecessor. Art thou our friend?—then remove from the city, and choose thee a province where thou wilt, and I will bestow it on thee to govern. But if not, I swear by God and our Prophet, that I will spare no one. All shall utterly perish."

As at the last, when the last *did* arrive, so now, when it seemed come,—a burst of brave resolution flashed up in the moment of utmost peril, amid the decay and ignominy of the Greek race. Constantinople sent back an answer worthy of her history and name, to the summons of the barbarian: "Go tell your master," said its people, "that we are indeed without help. We have no defender, to whose might we can look for protection, except God—God who upholds the helpless, and overthrows the strong. Now do thy pleasure." And they and their proud enemy prepared for the encounter.

But the encounter was not to be. That generation was to be sleeping in its graves before the change, which seemed at the very doors, should come; they were to be spared the shame, or denied the triumph, of seeing a new dynasty enthroned on the Golden Horn. The crash of a tremendous revolution

was indeed to startle the world; but it was the downfall of its most rising power, not the extinction of one that was doomed to ruin.

Bajazet was called away from Constantinople to meet the challenge of a rival conqueror, of his own faith and stock, but one before whose terrible ambition and greatness Bajazet is dwarfed and overshadowed, and his broad Ottoman realm dwindles down into the dimensions of a province. Timour was the last and the most remarkable of those Tartar wanderers, in whom the boundless and lawless liberty of the Steppes awakened the dream of the mastery of the world; who, driven onwards by a frenzied and devouring enthusiasm that could not stop, and bursting by their grim energy through all that barred their way, were able for a time to bind the civilisation of Asia to the throne of the Northern wilderness: and who, even after that throne had crumbled, left indelible traces of their character, their deeds and thoughts, on the memory, the history, and the legislation of the polished races of the South. Timour held the conquerors' spell over his savage brethren. Lured by that spell from their bleak, endless plains, and forbidding wastes, their roaming camps were once more gathered together for battle, under a chief who was able to break them to his discipline, and bend them as one man to the single aim of his vast ambition. Once more, and for the last time, the Mongol war-cry of "*forwards*"[1] passed from land to

[1] "Sürün:" Von Hammer, i. 223, 249.

land, across the Oxus, across the Volga, across the Euphrates, across the Indus, and at last across the Halys. About the time that Amurath the Victorious led the Ottomans into Europe, Timour began to conquer. While they had been advancing from the Hellespont to the Danube and the Euphrates, Timour had dashed to pieces power after power, from the deserts of Tartary to those of Arabia, from the shores of the Caspian to the fountains of the Ganges; he went onward, where Alexander and Genghis had turned back: the historic lands of Asia, the seats of her proudest kingdoms, the cradles and homes of her highest civilisation—Persia and Chaldæa, Armenia and Hindostan—were joined in a common wreck with the barbarian thrones of Turkistan and Russia, to form a Tartar empire; over their impregnable fortresses, their fairest and greatest cities, Ispahan, Bagdad, Delhi, Damascus, his sword had passed, like the lightning or the pestilence, and left them without man or beast, marked by their reeking walls and pyramids of human skulls;—spoiled, that by their arts and industry Samarcand might be adorned; ruined, that Samarcand might be left standing alone, the one great city of the Tartar reign; while during the forty years that his armies traversed to and fro, and his horse-hoofs marked the soil, the lands of civilised man,—of those who are nourished by the wheatsheaf, the vine, and the olive,—tilth and garden, orchard and watered meadow, seemed yielding to the encroachments of his native steppe, to furnish hunting-

grounds for his game, or unpeopled pastures for the horses and flocks, whose flesh and milk was the food of his race. The perfect and favourite number of the Tartars, nine, had been all but fulfilled and multiplied in the dynasties he had annihilated, and the crowns he had united on his head; *almost* nine princely houses, thrice nine separate lands, were reckoned when he told the sum of his conquests,—one more great family was wanting to complete the tale when he marched against Bajazet; and the dynasty of the Ottomans made the ninth.

Such was the fierce destroyer of men whom Bajazet had now to meet; a grimly earnest, lame old man, with long white hair, hair which had been white from his infancy, flowing from his massy head and open brow,[1]—a man who hated jests and lies,—grave and weighty in his sayings, finding his solace in complicated games of chess, or in discussing with his scheiks abstruse and thorny questions of theology or casuistry; a man who never forgot, never desisted, never regretted the past or repented of what he had done: a man before whom the gems and gold of Asia had been showered, and who had all its glories and delights at his command; yet after nearly half a century of war and victory—war almost without a break, and victory without a reverse—was neither enervated or wearied; who was to go on till his last breath, conquering, planning, and building up with restless and sagacious energy—whose organising mind had

[1] Von Hammer, i. 212.

covered Asia with a network of rapid communications and watchful intelligencers, and had introduced obedience, subordination, a rule of array and equipment, and a method of systematic and well imagined tactics, among his swarming hordes; who spent his life in wasting Asia, yet was full of wise thoughts of statesmanship, and is named as one of the founders and sources of Asiatic law:—a man, merciless as death, to whose horrible butcheries of his Moslem brethren, the bloody morrow of Nicopolis seems but an excusable catastrophe of war; yet who professed the stern piety and benevolence of the Koran, who deigned to disclaim the character of a man of blood, and to throw the burden of what he had shed on his enemies; and who, in the height of his pride, took pleasure in contrasting the magnificence of his fortune with his crippled body, and in ostentatiously confessing that in all that he had achieved or won, he felt himself but the frail and feeble instrument of the hand of God.

Nearly forty years before, Ottomans and Mongols had each gone on their way to conquer; at the end of that time they met. It was but natural that the conqueror, who had spared no Mahometan house or kingdom, and who had been driven by the frenzy of universal dominion to the plains of India and the wastes of Russia, should refuse to turn back from any boundary that his horses could overleap or swim. Yet Timour does appear to have been indisposed to break in on the territories of the Ottomans; he came,

and marked his coming by the destruction of a great city, and then turned away; and Bajazet seems to have wantonly tempted and drawn aside the tempest from its path. At any rate, if the shock must have come, and his last and proudest crown had still to be won by Timour, either by voluntary homage or war, he was not suffered to want a pretext by the insolence of Bajazet. Irritating messages and words of scorn were exchanged by both; but the pride of Timour was dignified and self-possessed, compared with the furious and frantic defiance of the most sacred laws of Eastern right and courtesy, which Bajazet displayed to the ambassadors and the personal honour of Timour. "The son of Murad is mad," he said, when the last insult that an Oriental can offer or endure was cast in his face; and he gave the decisive order to go forward against Anatolia. Bajazet, who had the city of the Cæsars in his grasp, who had been dreaming of planting his horsetails even in their Western seat, could only be brought to look upon Timour as an adventurous and lucky freebooter of the desert. His soldiers were murmuring for their pay, and he refused to open his treasures. His chiefs warned him of the numbers of the invading cavalry, and urged him to avoid the plains and occupy the passes and the hills; but his only care was to find and exterminate them in open battle. He hastened to the frontier. They too were hastening on; they swept forward, and passed him far on his flank; and when he had lost their trace, and was waiting for

them to appear, he heard of them many marches behind him. They were between him and his capital, assailing the great fortress of Angora which defends the road. He had to seek them once more in the very heart of his dominions. This time they did not disappoint him. He found the Tartar host well posted, entrenched and ready. In the infatuation of his pride, to exhibit before their eyes his scorn of their power, he exhausted his already wearied soldiers with the vainglorious spectacle of an Oriental hunting-party. The Tartars, meanwhile, were busy in cutting off or spoiling the water-springs by which the Ottomans were supplied. Then came the day of battle. It would be a perilous attempt to estimate the numbers on an eastern battle-field, described by eastern chroniclers. But there can be no doubt that many years had passed since a muster and a shock, like that of the Mongol and Ottoman powers on the plains of Angora, had been witnessed in the East. There, in Bajazet's line of battle, were arrayed—Christians and Moslems once more together—the conquerors of Nicopolis; on the left, Stephen, with his black Servian cuirassiers, who had broken the last reserves of the Hungarian army; and in the centre the compact and stubborn lines of the Janissaries. But on Bajazet's right were masses of the unsteady and discontented troops of Asia, whose hereditary princes were in the camp of Timour, and Tartar colonists from Thrace, won over by Timour's emissaries to the side of their former kinsmen. A stately

array of elephants is said to have formed the van of Timour's army; but his real strength was the broad and open plain. There his overwhelming numbers found space and play for the unrelaxing impetuosity of their successive charges. They overlapped, they tore asunder the Ottoman line; they surrounded, they burst, in repeated assaults, on its divided fragments. Large bodies of the Asiatic troops, with the Tartar auxiliaries, went over to Timour. The Servian horsemen fought hard and dangerously, but they were wedged together by swarming throngs, as the French knights had been at Nicopolis, and perished as they did. Stephen, on his barded war-horse, broke through the press, and made his way to where Bajazet had retired to a rising ground, and with the impenetrable and unshaken Janissaries maintained the conflict, when it had ceased everywhere else. Stephen urged Bajazet to escape, but he refused. Despair or hope still bound him to that fated field, where his bravest and his dearest dared not abide with their master and father. All fled before the inevitable ruin—chiefs like Stephen and Evrenos, officers like the Grand Vizier, the Aga of the Janissaries, the Captain of the Horse-guards—his surviving sons, each as chance opened a way through the Tartars, one westward to Europe, another eastward to the Pontic mountains, another southward to the crags of Taurus. But all day long, from morning to nightfall, under the blazing July sun,[1] the Janissaries, faint with thirst, and falling

[1] 20th July 1402.

fast under the Tartar onslaughts, held on without flinching for the last chance of retrieving their master's fortune; and he held on with them. But that fortune, so dazzling and so unchequered, had that day run out its term. Night came down on his thinned and sinking footmen, and he saw that on the field there was nothing more to be done. He was persuaded to mount and fly. But beyond the spears of the Janissaries, the Tartar horsemen were masters of the plain. His horse stumbled or stopped to drink; and he was taken. The titular head of the royal tribe of the Mongols, the lineal heir of Genghis, now a vassal chief in the Tartar host, led the Sultan of the Ottomans to the tent of his conqueror.

It is credible, and quite consonant with Eastern feelings, and with Timour's character, that he was received with proud and grave courtesy. When Timour's fury had spent itself, he was the man to eye curiously and moralise with irony on the monument before him of the strange mixtures and alternations in man's lot. He made Bajazet, it is related, seat himself on the carpet next himself, and conversed with him on the incidents of the fight. Then he allowed his thoughts to flow on that mighty share of power which he had that day confirmed, and which Bajazet had the same day forfeited. "Thou and I," he said, "owe great and special thanks to God the Lord for the dominion which He has granted to us." —"Why so?" said the prisoner.—"Because He has divided it between two such people as we—a lame

man like me and a gouty one like you: to the lame man He has given all from India to Sivas, and to the gouty one all from Sivas to Hungary. Surely this leaves no doubt what the dominion of the world is worth in the eyes of God. If it had not been less than nothing he would have shared it between men sound of body and whole of limb, not between a pair of cripples like you and me. But because thou hast been unthankful to God, and not acknowledged His benefits, He has sent this chastisement by *my* hand, the rod of His anger. Yet take it not to heart, brother Bajazet. If a man keeps but safe and sound, he soon comes back to fortune and blessing." But the words of the conqueror, jesting in the moment of triumph with his own prosperity, are no real proof of the clemency or generosity of the man. Modern criticism has indeed changed the *iron cage* into a closed and latticed litter, and traced the origin of a world-wide story to a confusion between two like-sounding words. But Bajazet was impatient of captivity, and Timour was resolved to display his captive in the streets of Samarcand. The harshness of the imprisonment no doubt increased as the prisoner tried to break from it. And the natural scorn of the strong and unrelenting barbarian for what he had overthrown and ruined, for the helplessness which was before his eyes every day, soon broke out and overrode all temporary sentiment about the vanity of human greatness. Bajazet had been a passionate and famous hunter: Timour sent him a present of hounds and

hawks, to mock him with the remembrances of his days of freedom. And more than this, the women of Bajazet's harem, and even one of his legitimate wives, were dragged forth in public at the Tartar's banquet, and forced to serve wine to his guests. Bajazet was carried about in Timour's train, as he slowly turned back to Samarcand. But he died in Asia Minor before the year of his captivity was out. "God's we are," said Timour, "and to God we return," when he was told of Bajazet's death; and four days after he received, with the same words, the announcement of the death of his favourite grandson. He gave Bajazet's remains to his son Musa; and his tomb was raised, like those of his fathers, by the mosque which he had built, amid the groves and rushing waters of Brusa. Yet one more humiliation, the last that man, and the bitterest that Moslem can go through, was reserved to complete the reversal of his fortune. Alone of all the Ottoman kings, the proud and brilliant Bajazet was not allowed his last rest amid the great dead of his line and race. In the confusion which followed his death a chief of Karaman, of that family which Bajazet had crushed and disinherited, was able to take vengeance for the misfortunes of his house in the city and at the grave of their destroyer; and in Brusa, Bajazet's chosen seat of glory and delight, his tomb was violated and overthrown, his corpse torn up, burnt, and its ashes scattered, that it might never again be restored to its resting-place, to give a savage triumph to a spiteful rebel.

Athens after Syracuse, Rome after Cannæ, France after Waterloo, were not so shattered and laid low as the Ottoman state was after the rout of Angora. Just a hundred years before it had begun to be. In the first years of the fourteenth century Othman became an independent chief in an obscure castle on the borders of Bithynia. In the first years of the fifteenth his descendants were crushed under the iron might of Timour. In the interval they had achieved an empire. And now it seemed as if the course of their empire were run, like that of so many fortunate and short-lived Asiatic dynasties; that the time was come for it to fall in pieces, and give place to another, or be frittered away in the hands of a number of quarrelsome and impotent local chiefs. For half a century the event seemed to hang in the balance. Desperate efforts, perilous struggles, compliances, submissions, and yieldings to the time, which would have provoked the indignation of Orchan and the first Amurath, marked the period; one hard and anxious trial of strength came at its close; and then the Ottoman power emerged, compact, invincible, and more terrible than before, to resume its career and accomplish its strange destiny, and long confront, with threatening and with scorn, the greatest and strongest polities of the rising civilisation of Western Christendom.

The Tartar hordes pushed westwards till they were stopped by the broad Hellespont and the Ægean. They spoiled Brusa and its treasures, and burnt its

mosques and schools; a storm and a massacre left Smyrna in ruins and blood; and then the devastating wave swept backwards, from the provinces over which it had broken, to roll to the other extremity of Asia and menace China. But before Timour had departed, all humbled themselves before him, and acknowledged his supremacy. Soleiman, the son of Bajazet, safe behind the sea in his palace at Adrianople, yet asked and received the investiture of the lordship of the Ottomans and of the kingdom of Roum, in a charter impressed with the print of the red hand of the Mongol.[1] Timour, it is said, had graciously received the prayer of Bajazet, that he would not root out his posterity, nor utterly destroy a race which was the bulwark and hope of the Moslems. From the Cæsar of Constantinople he received, before he departed, the tribute of the conquered—from the Sultan of Egypt, the submission of a vassal; and in the mosques and mints of Cairo prayer was said, and coin struck, in the imperial name of Timour. The consolidating work of the Ottoman conquerors in Asia Minor was broken up and thrown back for many years. The Turkish principalities, which had been fused together under their sway, were again divided under their restored dynasties; and Timour left the Ottomans of Brusa once more, what they had been under their first

[1] Instead of a signature or a seal Timour, according to the Mongol usage, dipped his palm in red ink, and stamped it on the paper; see p. 363.

emir, but one among the fragments of the Seljouk kingdom.

All had to be begun again in the Ottoman State; and *it did* begin again with a fierce war of succession, among the sons of Bajazet, whom the overthrow of Angora had hurled apart, to different parts of his ruined dominions. There still survived the emblem and the refuge of the unity of the State, in the court and capital of Adrianople. There the "Gate" of the house of Othman was secure from the assaults of the Tartars, and had not much to fear from the neighbouring dynasty of Constantinople. There were collected also the great officers and chiefs who had served it so zealously, who had witnessed its greatness and hoped in its fortune, who were imbued with its spirit, and knew its traditions—the Grand Vizier, Black Halil's son;—Evrenos, the great chief of Roumelia, an old man of wellnigh a hundred years, yet unabated in energy and keenness, who had, as a Christian, defended Brusa against Orchan, and had lived to accompany Bajazet, as a Moslem, to his ruin at Angora; Michal-Ogli, the descendant of the first renegade companion of Othman; the Aga of the Janissaries, the captain of the horseguards, and the heads of the law: there, also, were the remains or the reserves of the Janissaries, and their schools; and to the prince who ruled at Adrianople, the Turkish feudatories of Europe looked up as to their master and liege-lord. There was the nucleus of the Empire, and there, in fact, it was saved. But who

the prince should be who was to rule at Adrianople, was long uncertain. Strength and success are better tests than priority of birth, among the Ottomans, of the right of inheritance; and twice the veteran servants of the Empire at Adrianople transferred their allegiance to a pretender, who gave the best promise of upholding the fortunes which they had founded with Orchan and Amurath. They deserted Soleiman, an indolent debauchee, for the more energetic Musa; in less than three years after, Evrenos and his companions called in, against the ferocity and oppression of Musa, the tried valour and wise humanity of the prince, who had reconquered a great part of his patrimony in Asia, Mahomet "the Gentleman."[1] Mahomet, says a Turkish historian, was the "Noah who saved the ark of the State amid the deluge of the Tartars."[2] But Mahomet himself had to maintain his right against another pretended, or perhaps real brother; and to the end of his life he was at war with the spirit of rebellion, which the great break-up of the Empire had evoked among its vassals, a spirit which he had to leave still unsubdued, to embarrass and keep back the ambition of his successor.

When Manuel Palæologus returned from the West to his capital, which he must have left with scarcely a hope of seeing it again, he found his position strangely altered, towards his dreaded neighbours. They, whom he had left thundering at his gates, had

[1] "*Tchelebi*," Mahomet's title, is thus translated by Von Hammer.

[2] Von Hammer, i. 281.

been humbled so low by their reverses, as to beg the help, and make sacrifices for the favour, of a Greek emperor. Soleiman had given a son and daughter of Bajazet as hostages for peace, and offered to restore to Manuel the Turkish conquests on the Ægean and the Euxine, from the Strymon to Varna. In the wars of the succession, Manuel was able to throw in a considerable balance on the side he chose. To Manuel, Mahomet was indebted, at least, for the transport of his army to Europe; and when his victory over his brother Musa was secure, he confirmed the agreement of Soleiman, and yielded up to the Emperor the fortresses of Thessaly and of the two seas. "Tell *my father*," was the astonishing message of the grandson of Amurath, and the son of Bajazet,—the more astonishing as it was sent in good faith,—"Tell *my father*, the Greek Emperor, *that with his help I have won my paternal kingdom*, that I owe him thanks for this, that henceforth I shall be bound to him as a son to his father, and joyfully do him service." That a prince of the blood of Othman should have professed to reverence the Cæsar of Constantinople as his father was strange enough; it was strange that he should have condescended to pay an annual pension to Manuel for keeping in close custody a pretender to the Ottoman throne; but it was still more strange, that, dying, he should have wished to shield his younger children from the jealousy of his successor, and *their* brother, by solemnly committing them to the guardianship of

the old enemy, the despised vassal, and long destined victim of his house.

And yet in these days of weakness and peril, when it was wise to adjourn their ambition, and amid the confusion of family quarrels and unceasing intestine war, it is most remarkable to observe in the Ottomans the traits of undamped energy and returning power. Their old dominion gradually stole again over the Ægean coasts, and then, with the exception of the Karamanian princes, over the rest of Asia Minor. Musa, during his short reign, was able to recover the boundaries which the Ottomans had possessed before Bajazet's fall, beyond the Morava, the Strymon, and the Balkan; and Mahomet, though disinclined to war in Europe, in order that he might secure the reduction of Asia, yet when he was forced into it, compelled the submission and tribute of Wallachia, and built the fortress of Giurgevo beyond the Danube, to overawe it. Venice thought it worth while to negotiate, for the first time, and even after Loredano's great victory at Gallipoli, to renew, an equal treaty with the Ottomans, during this period of their crippled power. The adorning of their capitals still went on. Soleiman began and Mahomet finished a magnificent mosque at Adrianople; at Brusa Mahomet finished another, equally famous for its grandeur, which had been begun by Amurath; while his own "Green Mosque," with its walls incrusted with variegated marbles, and its domes and minarets covered with green porcelain,—together

with its adjoining school and almonry, and his own tomb in a garden, similarly faced with tablets of porcelain,—is spoken of as one of the rarest examples of Ottoman taste. It is less surprising, perhaps, that in those troubled days should be found the earliest gleams, though they seem but faint ones, of Ottoman literature,—of their poetry, their history, and their law.

It is melancholy and humiliating to contrast with the unshaken purpose and steady recovery of the Ottomans, in the most trying crisis of their history, the aimless, low-minded, hopeless policy, without principle, without forethought, without honesty, without courage, of the Christians around them. What were they doing,—those Greeks who had all but seen Bajazet change St. Sophia into a mosque,—those Sclavonian races who were threatened with a bondage which was to rob them of their children, and turn those children into their taskmasters,—those great powers of the West, whose faith and peace were menaced by a power, in whom the ancient fanaticism of the Saracens had revived in double strength, and whose life was war—what were they doing during that unhoped for and fleeting half century of respite and opportunity? All the world knew why the Ottomans were encamped at Adrianople, on the great road from the Bosporus to the valley of the Danube, looking at once eastward and westward, to Constantinople, and to Venice and Vienna. All the world knew why the Janissaries were instituted;

and why the bands of Turkish spoilers beat all the countries, from the Euxine to the Adriatic, for the flower of their children, to feed the schools and recruit the ranks of that hateful company. And what were the Christians doing? They did not even stand by, to let their enemies struggle out of their reverses as they might. They were making leagues with them, with those who remained of them still on the sacred soil of Europe; they were calling them in to their own internal quarrels, or taking sides in theirs; they were fighting their battles for them, and aiding the stronger among them to put down the weaker; they were helping them to quell their own discords, and heal their own wounds, and build up once more the strength and unity of their State. But for the Cæsar Manuel, Mahomet could not have found shipping for his army, when he was uniting once more the divided courts of Adrianople and Brusa. But for the Genoese Adorno, Amurath II. could not have been ferried across into Europe to overcome the pretender Mustafa. Stephen of Servia took up the cause and retrieved the fortune of the fiercest and most dangerous against the most indolent of the sons of Bajazet, when no Moslem power would back him; and Servians and Wallachs joined battle with Greeks under the very walls of Constantinople, to determine whether Musa or Soleiman should be the legitimate heir of Othman. Loredano conquered at Gallipoli, only to gain a commercial treaty. In the West, the Popes went on bargaining for a hollow

union, extorted from the fears, but retracted again by the indignation of the Greeks: from time to time they faintly repeated the call of more earnest days for a holy war; but no one, in that shrewd and deeply-corrupted age, was moved by what all knew to be the mere cry of feeble selfishness, to dissolve an alliance, or stave off a threatening council. Sigismund of Hungary, the old antagonist of the Ottomans, kept up a border war, and achieved some partial successes, which did not wipe out the memory or repair the disaster of Nicopolis; but he was soon involved in the intrigues of the great schism, the home dangers of the Hussite war, and the anxious issues of the Councils of Constance and Basle. Neither the races whom the Ottomans enslaved, nor Christian Europe which was dishonoured by their presence within her limits, had any right to complain of the shame and the bondage. The final victory of the Ottomans was the fair victory, which resolution, patience, and foresight, will gain in any cause over indolent or cowardly apathy, which will neither dare, nor endure, nor look forward.

Mahomet the Restorer died before his work was half done. He died suddenly at Adrianople, when Amurath his eldest son was at the utmost verge of Asia Minor. Once more the succession of Othman's house, that delicate thread on which the life of the Ottoman state—vigorous and tenacious as it was—depended, was in danger. Amurath was summoned with the utmost speed; but the utmost speed could

not bring him for many weeks. Mahomet's viziers concealed their master's death. For forty-one days the perilous secret was kept. The soldiers murmured and disbelieved. They insisted on seeing their Sultan. They would listen to no remonstrances of the physicians, and at fearful risk, they were successfully cheated. In a closed and darkened kiosk—for the Sultan, it was said, could not bear the air—the corpse of Mahomet was presented to them, seated on his throne, behind a glass door; pages concealed beneath his vestments moved his arms; the soldiers defiling before the door, saluted what seemed the living form of their chief, and their misgivings were satisfied. But Amurath the Second had hardly been girded with the scimitar of Othman, before his right was challenged. Manuel, the Greek Emperor, had a pretender in his keeping, who claimed to be the son of Bajazet. Amurath, in spite of his father's will, refused to give up his father's children, the blood of Othman, to the guardianship of a Greek Cæsar; and Manuel let loose the pretender Mustafa. The Ottomans were at once again divided. Mustafa was able to rally to him the sons of Evrenos and the feudal chiefs of Thrace. Beneath the walls of Adrianople, he boldly called on the Janissaries to yield him their allegiance, and his voice and presence were enough to win them over to his side; he was strong enough to insult the Greek Emperor, who had been both his gaoler and his ally, and to cross into Asia and threaten Brusa. There the tide turned

against him: as his voice had lured the Janissaries of Adrianople to his side, so the call of their old chieftain Michalogli was known and obeyed in the camp of Mustafa's light horsemen. He was deserted, and escaped to Europe. But Amurath had no ships to follow him. He applied for aid to Manuel; Manuel refused his ships, except in return for the children of Mahomet. Mustafa might have reigned at Adrianople, and Amurath at Brusa, but for the traders of the factories of Genoa. Adorno, the son of a doge of Genoa, proffered his galleys and his soldiers. All was done—as between the heartiest and trustiest allies—by the Moslem Sultan and the Christian Podestà. The Italian's service was frank and faithful. The Ottoman's acknowledgments were large and princely. Amurath was accompanied by Adorno, with his archers and his black bands of Italian infantry, in his victorious march to Adrianople. Adorno gained for the trade of Genoa a new station on the Ionian coast, and the free working of the alum mines of Phocæa; and enjoyed, unmolested, during his lifetime, the tolls and profits of its custom-house.

The spirit of revolt was not quelled by the destruction of Mustafa. The long reign of the second Amurath was troubled to the end, and his vigorous and able enterprises continually checked, by the restlessness and impatience which the defeat of Angora had awakened in the Turcoman chieftains of Asia Minor. The old families to whom Timour had once

more opened a chance of independence, were very loath to surrender it again to their powerful yet now frequently divided conquerors. And the Ottomans, though strong enough to chastise and weigh them down, were a long time before they could, by successive efforts, extinguish, as they had done before, their revived power. They were often obliged, for the time, to be forbearing, even in victory. Three times did the restored chiefs of Karaman, the old rivals of the Ottomans, break their engagements, and stir up war. Their inveterate feud made them intrigue with Amurath's Christian enemies—with Manuel of Constantinople, and Sigismund of Hungary. Yet after each victory Amurath was content with a tribute, or the cession of a city, with allying their princes to his family by marriage, or investing them with distant governments; he never pushed his advantage to extremity, and the rebellious house of Karaman was neither extirpated nor dispossessed. The Ottomans also began to employ against rebels whom it was difficult to attack, the smooth perfidy which their successors learnt so well to use. Thus was cut off the wily and able Djouneid, one of the most turbulent and dangerous chiefs of the Ionian coast, who had been the life of every civil war since Bajazet's defeat, and who had successively betrayed every pretender, whose cause he had directed and strengthened. Iurkedsch-Pasha set the precedent of that peculiar fashion of ensnaring an enemy, which is so familiar to all readers of Ottoman history. Four Turcoman

brothers were the chiefs of a band of freebooters who infested Iurkedsch's government of Amasia. He sent to offer them, in the Sultan's name, a territory of their own, if they would give their assistance against another tribe. The offer was accepted, the treaty concluded, the chiefs complimented and honoured with presents, and the whole band, 400 men, enticed to partake of the Pasha's hospitality at Amasia. In the drunkenness and carelessness of a sumptuous banquet, they were overpowered and seized. They were thrown into a cavern in the rock of the citadel, the entrance was walled up, and all were stifled with smoke. The doer of this deed was the *Lala*, the tutor of Amurath, and after him, of his sons; and the deed itself is recorded to his honour by the historian, who relates nothing but the worthy actions of his master's house. In this there is nothing to wonder at: the banquet was, from the times in which Idris wrote, the usual scene of the Ottoman's craftiest and deadliest revenge.[1]

Yet Amurath accomplished what his father had begun. At the end of his long reign, the Ottoman power, which was yet in danger at its commencement, was once more all that it had been, in greatness and security, on the eve of Angora. His reign began by Manuel of Constantinople dictating conditions of friendship, and setting up a creature of his own to invade Amurath's birthright. It ended by Amurath's choosing a vassal Cæsar among Manuel's children,

[1] Von Hammer, i. 330. Idris died 1523.

and imposing the last emperor on the throne of Constantine.

The old preponderance of the Ottomans in all the countries between the Carpathians and the three seas, gradually rose clearer and more irresistible. Their frontier began to advance again, no more to recede for centuries. Beyond their frontier, the adjoining Christian states paid them tribute, and served them in their wars; and their armies began to appear with terrible power in those which still bade them defiance, and had hitherto been beyond their reach. Their western post on the Danube was pushed from Widdin to Semendra; and when they were obliged to retire from before Belgrade, Amurath said he could afford to wait, for Belgrade must be theirs sooner or later. Janina the southern, and Croia the northern capital of Albania, became Turkish cities. Janina offered its keys on condition of retaining its franchises; and in the demolition of its churches and the forced marriages of its daughters, experienced what Turkish faith was worth. The Lord of Croia, John Castriota, died when his four sons were hostages at Amurath's Porte; and Amurath, when he seized their heritage, compelled them to embrace his faith, and serve it with their swords. But the outrage and the perfidy raised up its avenger; and one of these forced converts has left his name to history, as the wiliest and fiercest foe the Ottomans ever encountered, the implacable and unconquered Scanderbeg. Later in his reign, Amurath wrested the Morea from the stoutest of the Palæologi,

and restored it only, swept of 60,000 slaves, as a tributary fief of the Porte. Within the limits of the old Greek Empire, he fiercely warned off every intruder, even when he had not actually taken possession. John Palæologus, or the inhabitants themselves, had sold Thessalonica to the Venetians. Amurath claimed it of the Republic. "It had been conquered by his grandfather Bajazet; it was part of the inheritance of his house; its possession by the Greeks and their Cæsars he might have overlooked—they were the natural tenants of the land, and its first masters —but no Latin would he allow to intercept his claim. The Venetians must go back to their own land: otherwise he would be there himself." The embassies of the Republic were sent in vain: "Have you authority to restore me my Salonik?"[1] was his first and only question. The Venetians kept their ground for a few years, but at length Amurath appeared with overpowering numbers before its walls. The Italian defenders were few; the Greek inhabitants disaffected; an earthquake spread discouragement and alarm. Amurath, while his arrows swept the ramparts and his miners dug beneath them, was liberal in his promises of pardon and protection; but when the Venetians still held out, he gave the spoil and the people of Thessalonica to his army, and only reserved to himself the ground on which it stood, and the bare walls of its buildings. Thessalonica was stormed and depopulated—the last of the many terrible calamities

[1] Daru, xiii. No. 7.

which had fallen on that great city—one, like Thebes, of the unlucky cities of history;[1] the first great siege in which the Ottomans, soon to become famous in this trying operation of war, assailed with success, obstinately defended walls, and proved the fury and power of their storming columns.

The first great siege in which they had succeeded, —but not the first which they had attempted. Amurath had, early in his reign, replied to the slippery and ill-judged policy of Manuel, and to his insincere excuses when it failed, by saying that he would bring an answer in person to the gates of Constantinople. He came, through ravaged fields and wasted villages, where his soldiers had torn up the very roots of the vines and fruit-trees, and invested the land front of the city, from the sea to the head of the Golden Horn. The attack was the prelude and rehearsal of the great siege, thirty-one years later: the points assailed were the same; the siege-works and engines of the Ottomans were on a greater scale than any yet recorded in their history. They raised a continuous mound with fire-proof towers, facing, at a bow-shot's distance, and commanding with its missiles, the rampart of the city; they had all the ancient machinery of a siege, but they had not yet the new artillery of Mahomet the Conqueror. Amurath had promised Constantinople and its treasures to the conquering Moslems. Besides the soldiers of his host, there were collected round the Christian capital a rabble from all

[1] Von Hammer, i. 336.

parts, lusting for plunder and blood,—armed ruffians to secure, and monied ruffians to purchase, the spoil, —such a crew as always collects in the East, when a rich and populous city is about to fall.[1] But foremost in ferocity and the madness of savage expectation and fanatic passion—crying, howling, whirling, raging like wild beasts—was an unclean rout of five hundred dervishes, who claimed the convents as their share of the prey, and kept at its height the excitement of the army. Their leader was the great Scheikh, Mahomet of Bochara, the Emir-Sultan, "the chief among the princes" of Moslem holiness, the brother-in-law of Bajazet, who had girded Amurath with Othman's sword, and who had once before, it was believed, helped the true heir of Othman by his prayers. At the river of Ulubad, when Amurath and his rival Mustafa stood with their armies on the opposite banks, and the fortune of the Empire hung in doubt between them, the great Scheikh of Bochara had prayed three days continuously for Amurath: at the end of the three days, the loud voice of Michalogli stirred their old allegiance in the hearts of Mustafa's *Akindjis*, and the rest of the usurper's host melted away from him. Now, the great Scheikh rode into the Ottoman camp amid a crowd of dervishes, who prostrated themselves before him, and kissed his hands, his feet, and the bridle of his mule. He shut himself up in his tent, to ascertain the fortunate day and hour when Con-

[1] Cf. Gordon and Tricoupi, on the siege of Tripolitza by the Greeks in 1821.

stantinople was to fall. When he came forth, he announced that on Monday, the 24th August, one hour after midday, he would lead the Ottomans into their destined capital. A dervish with a wooden sabre had preceded the early Ottomans in their attacks on the Bithynian cities; so now, at the appointed moment, the great Scheikh mounted his horse at the head of the army; a huge buckler was borne before him, and surrounded by the crowd of yelling and frantic dervishes, he drew his scimitar and shouted forth the signal for assault. But Constantinople resisted stoutly and successfully. Manuel the Emperor lay dying in his palace; but his son, John Palæologus, was at the post of danger—the fated gate of St. Romanus. *This* time the Cæsar did not stand there in vain. Women armed themselves with reaping-hooks for swords, and the ends of barrels for bucklers; monks and priests were mingled with the fighting men, and shouted the sacred names of the Gospel in answer to the war-cry of the dervishes. The fury of the assailants broke in vain against the ramparts; it raged till the setting of the sun; then, says the Greek historian of the siege, it suddenly passed into a panic terror; the Holy Virgin had appeared on the battlements, in awful majesty, to the very eyes of the great Scheikh himself; and the whole Turkish host burned their engines and broke up from Constantinople. The Turkish power had not yet regained its strength for the great effort: an outburst of civil war, and the appearance of a new pre-

tender at Nicæa, recalled Amurath from his premature enterprise; and he never after attempted to renew it.

And till the very end of the second Amurath's long and fortunate reign, that power, though mounting year by year to its old supremacy, was not safe from trials which jeoparded its existence. The last and decisive one—the issue of which might have overthrown the Ottomans more hopelessly than they were overthrown at Angora, but which did in fact give the Empire of the East finally into their hands—was their great conflict with Hungary. During the earlier part of Amurath's reign a desultory but bloody strife had raged on the border, in Transylvania and the Bannat; success had alternated, but Sigismund was an unlucky leader, and the wounds which the Turks inflicted were the deepest. Hungary was beginning to feel their system of preliminary ravage, by which each country, as they drew near its limits, was prepared for the condition of a tributary province, till they were able to occupy and parcel it out among themselves into *sanjaks* and *timars*, the military fiefs by which the Empire was maintained and carried forward. The cry of terror, "The wolves, the wolves!" continually gave notice to the Hungarian villages that the dreaded turbans had been descried in their neighbourhood; and Hungarian boys and maidens, swept from under the walls of Kronstadt and Hermanstadt, were driven in such troops through the passes of the Carpathians, that a slave was bartered against a pair of boots in

the Ottoman camp.[1] There were intervals of truce. The sessions and intrigues of the council of Basle were relieved by the appearance of the envoys and magnificent presents of the Emperor of the Turks to the Emperor of the Romans; the embassy came to congratulate Sigismund on his election to the empire, and to offer a lasting peace; it was received by him with solemn pomp and honour in the cathedral, and the presents and the peace accepted. Yet Sigismund was at the same time corresponding with the Karamanian disturbers of the Ottoman power in Asia, and Amurath's pashas were soon leading the Christians of Servia and Wallachia to join in a foray on their brethren of Transylvania. But towards the end of Amurath's life, the raids and inroads on the Hungarian border gradually swelled into a serious and formidable war, which for once threatened the Turkish power with the combined and determined hostility of Christendom. John Hunyady, who is said to have owed his existence to a furtive amour of King Sigismund with a fair Hungarian lady, when

[1] The historian Aschik-pachasade thus relates his own experience:—"Cette année (1438) le Sultan Mourad dévasta l'Hongrie. Le butin fut immense. Moi-même, le pauvre, j'achetai pour 100 aspres un beau garçon, car moi, le pauvre, je fis partie de l'armée. Un jour, je me présentai chez le Sultan, et il me fit don de plusieurs prisonniers; alors je lui dis: Seigneur et Sultan, il faudrait avoir des chevaux et de l'argent pour emmener ces prisonniers. Sur le champ il me fit donner deux chevaux et 5000 aspres. J'arrivai donc à Adrinople avec quatre chevaux et neuf prisonniers. Je vendis ceux-ci pour 300 et 200 aspres la tête.'—Von Hammer; (trad. de Hellert), notes: ii. 492.

he was seeking refuge from Bajazet's horsemen,[1]—a chief who in the irregular warfare of his country had no equal, except his contemporary Scanderbeg, fiery, audacious, crafty, and pitiless as the Ottomans whom he fought, and as open as they to corrupt and selfish influences,—had made his name, in two or three years, a word of fear to those before whom Europe trembled. The terrible and bloody "*Yanko*," as the Turks called him, had slain one of Amurath's veteran chiefs, and captured a second; his soldiers had slaughtered his captives before him while he sat at meat, and he had sent to Buda a chariot, heaped with the choicest spoils and surmounted with the heads of the fallen pashas. The warlike chiefs of Servia and Wallachia, who had so often fought for Amurath, went over to the winning Christian side; and a legate from Rome appeared in Hungary to fan the rising enthusiasm, and urge on the fierce valour of Hunyady. The rival councils of Basle and Florence, exhausted but not reconciled, had just ended their weary and fruitless sessions; and the crafty Venetian patrician, who sat in St. Peter's chair at Rome, seized the moment to turn men's thoughts from the thorny questions of internal reformation to a war with the Turks. Giuliano Cesarini, the cardinal who had so ably led the pertinacious and disrespectful fathers of Basle in their struggle with the Pope, and had already shown his zeal, if not his

[1] Engel, in Von Hammer, i. 188. It is not the common account.

aptitude, in the conduct of a religious war against the Bohemian heretics, was despatched to employ his eloquence, his subtlety, and his turbulence, in rousing the wild nations of the Danube and the Vistula, in the name of the Holy Father. He succeeded. A little while before, Amurath could interfere in the internal affairs of Poland, and prescribe the conditions on which he was willing to support young Ladislaus on its throne. Now Ladislaus, king at once of Poland and Hungary, was the head of a confederacy, which included all the neighbouring Christian nations, Hungary, Poland, Servia, Wallachia, together with the Pope, the great maritime powers, Genoa, Venice, and Philip of Burgundy, and lastly, the Cæsar, of Constantinople. A fleet of Italian and Flemish galleys, with the Pope's nephew, the Cardinal of Venice, as their admiral,—such a post might not be wholly unsuitable to one who, though a churchman, was a Venetian nobleman—assembled at the Hellespont. John Hunyady, followed by the king and Cardinal Julian, burst like a tempest across the Danube. He beat the Turks out of Servia. He swept them before him, along that famous north-western road, the old pathway of armies on their march to decide the fate of nations, which, for many years, had only seen them moving with unbroken uniformity against the west, and never in the reverse direction. Amurath stood under the walls of Nissa, only to be utterly overthrown. The Turks were pushed back to the mountain ramparts of the Balkan;

half the great road to Constantinople, with its stations, was in the hands of the Christian army, and winter found them preparing to scale, amid snow and storm, the guarded defiles of the Balkan. Hunyady first tried the pass of Trajan's Gate, through which the direct road is carried, but he found it barricaded with rocks and paved with ice; he tried the next one to the east, the pass of Isladi, and on Christmas Eve, amid rolling rocks and descending avalanches, fought his way to the southern crests of Hæmus, and opened the road through Trajan's Gate to the army of Ladislaus. Once more the Turks were routed beyond the Balkan; and Hunyady, after slaughtering a hundred and seventy of his prisoners, led back a brother-in-law of Amurath, and the Beglerbeg, or military chief of Roumelia, to grace his triumph at Buda.

For the first time in their history, a sultan of the Ottomans sued for peace. It was not the time for peace; for Albania was rising against him under Scanderbeg; the Christian fleet was in the Hellespont; the Karamanian Turks were in league with the Christian powers, which had driven him across the Balkan; and while he was losing Europe, he was threatened in Asia. It was not the time for peace; but Ladislaus waited long for promised succours to renew the war, and they did not come. George Brankovich, lord of Servia, wanted to get his children out of the hands of Amurath, and to bargain with him for the future remission of all tribute and

vassalage; it is alleged that 50,000 Turkish ducats won the influence of the great Hunyady to the side of peace.[1] In spite of the earnest efforts of Cardinal Julian peace was granted. The spring of 1444 was wasted, and in the summer a truce of ten years, by which Amurath surrendered the tributes of Servia and Wallachia, but retained possession of Bulgaria, was solemnly agreed to. Copies of the treaty were made in both languages. Amurath swore to it on the Koran, and the Turks demanded that King Ladislaus should swear on the Sacred Host. This was refused; but he gave his oath to observe it on the Gospels.

Such was the fruit of Hunyady's boasted "Long Campaign." Such was the use which the Christian potentates of the Danube made of the first great success they had ever won against the Ottomans. One of them got back his children; a couple of provinces were spared their tributes, till their mighty and inflexible enemy had gathered up his strength, in the breathing time which their princes had pledged to him; and for this ignoble and miserable bargain, the only moment when they had him at advantage was thrown away, the claims were neglected of their allies, who had gone with them into the war but were not included in the peace, and the hopes and the future of their brethren and their children, and of that Christian faith for which they had so pompously taken up arms, finally sacrificed. Well might Cardinal Julian indignantly protest against

[1] Contin. de Fleury, an. 1444. No. 2.

their selfish and short-sighted folly. Well might remonstrances from the Bosporus and the Hellespont denounce their breach of faith with their confederates, and warn them of their madness, in dreaming that a treaty would keep back the Turks. A great opportunity—the greatest chance which the Christians had yet had against them—was lost. It would have been well if this had been all; if the gross mistake of levity and greediness had not been followed by a great and memorable crime, deliberately committed under the auspices of the most venerable authority in Christendom.

Cardinal Julian had spoken like a statesman, wisely and manfully, *before* the oath by which King Ladislaus had confirmed the treaty. He spoke like a swindler and a knave *after* it. The word of a king, and the oath of a Christian, sworn, if not on the Holy Sacrament, at least on the Holy Gospels, were in his view no difficulties in attempting to undo what he had failed to prevent. It is likely enough that the light and wayward chiefs around him soon repented of their bargain. It is certain that the representative of the apostolic throne left no means untried to make them do so. But to their instincts, rude and fierce as they were, the oath was a barrier. Then did their chief spiritual guide, speaking in the name of the Great Pastor of Christians, and by the authority of Christ, undertake to allay their scruples. To these untaught barbarian children of rapine and war, the subtle and practised lawyer of Padua, who

had come bringing them wisdom and benedictions from Rome, unfolded and explained the favourite thesis of that age of audacious hypocrisy and perfidy, that an oath is not binding, when high considerations of public good, and especially of the good of religion, are interfered with by its observance: and when the plausible diplomatist had confounded their sense of right and wrong, the Apostolic Legate, by the command and the divine powers of his master, pronounced the oath invalid, and absolved all from its obligation. On the 15th of July Ladislaus swore peace on the Gospels to Amurath. On the 4th of August, Cardinal Julian, the Legate of the Pope, made the king and his council swear again, in the name of the most Holy Trinity, of the most Glorious Virgin Mary, of St. Stephen and St. Ladislaus, that he would break his treaty with the Ottomans, and appear with an army before Orsova on the 1st of September. After such a deed, by such actors, it is hardly worth noticing, that some of them contrived that corruption and deceit should be added to perjury; but it *is* recorded that Hunyady, who is said to have been bought *for* the treaty by Amurath's gold, was bought for its violation by the promise of the kingdom of Bulgaria; and that, at his instance, the public declaration of war was delayed till the 1st of September, in order that the Ottomans might have restored the fortresses which they were to give up by the treaty, before they had warning that it was at an end.

Amurath had chosen that very moment for the

first of his two abdications: whatever his reason, the step itself argued as much reliance on the oath of Ladislaus, as confidence in the general strength of the Ottoman state. But he at once reassumed the government, and hurried back to Europe, when he heard that the Hungarians were assailing the fortresses of Bulgaria, on the Danube and the sea. How he crossed from Asia is yet a question. The Hellespont was held by the Western galleys; the Bosporus, it might be supposed, was commanded by the navy of the Golden Horn; and for neither were the warships of the Turks at that time a match. It is reported by one of the Hungarian historians that ships of Genoa ferried the Turkish soldiers across the Bosporus, and that the fare was a ducat a-head. However this was, Amurath crossed the Balkan, and with greatly superior numbers, met the Christian host, encamped before Varna, with their left flank resting on the marshy lake of Devno, on ground which has since been made but too famous, by the losses of a Russian army in an obstinate siege, and of an English one in the idleness of a pestilential summer. On St. Martin's Eve, 1444, was fought this great wager of battle. On high, between the two armies, and between earth and heaven, was exposed on a spear-point the treaty which Ladislaus had signed and sworn to; and in terrible words—words recorded by Christians and Ottomans—Amurath called on Him by whom it was sworn, to prove his truth by punishing the guilty. The wild and con-

fused battle of the cavalry, the main arm on both sides, and the only one employed by the Christians, seemed at first to go heavily against the Ottomans. Even Amurath's courage and hope gave way: he was turning his horse out of the throng, when one of his pashas, more trustful than himself, seized his bridle and forced him to remain; but so near were the Hungarian sabres to his person, that one of them struck down an officer of the Janissaries, who attempted to release the Sultan's bridle from the hand of his daring subject. The horsemen of Hunyady and of Wallachia had borne down and swept before them, on the right wing and the left, the spahis of Thrace and of Anatolia; but the burning core of battle was, as always, where amid the whirl and reflux of charging and rallying squadrons, the infantry of the Janissaries fought and stirred not. The Janissaries stood firm behind their ditch and palisades, and till they were broken, the field was not lost. Ladislaus dashed against them with the fiery youth of Hungary, and perished beneath their spears. He fell wounded: they refused him quarter: his head was raised aloft on a pike, and Hunyady fought in vain to wrest from them this signal of the Ottoman victory. That ghastly sight spoke to both armies in clear and dreadful emphasis the verdict of the day. The Wallachs and Servians fled and dispersed; and in the evening Hunyady himself escaped, and left the Hungarians to defend themselves as they could, behind the baggage waggons. Next day the camp

was stormed, and they were massacred. Two bishops of Hungary fell among the magnates and chiefs who perished with King Ladislaus; and with them, perished the lying prophet, who had absolved them from their oath, Cardinal Julian.

The miserable fall, in the flower and pride of youth, of a King of Poland and Hungary; the death in battle of a Cardinal and a Legate of Rome, who had played such a leading part in the history of his day; and the swift and sudden stroke of retribution on violated faith, inflicted before the eyes of both Christian and Mahometan worlds, have made the field of Varna memorable, above more decisive battles. Varna, terrible as was its lesson, had not broken the Hungarian power, nor quelled the spirit of Hunyady. Which nation was to be mistress on the Danube had still to be determined. It was determined four years after. In the summer of 1448 Hunyady led forth a numerous army, the finest and best equipped that Hungary had yet raised, with auxiliaries from Wallachia, and a band of German and Bohemian musketeers, across the great river, and up the valley of the Morava. Servia was then leagued with the Moslems, and ravaged by the Christians. In the autumn Amurath and Hunyady met again; their meeting was where Turks and Christians had met once before, under another Amurath, and a king of Servia,—the mountain plain of Kossova, the famous "Ousel's field."[1] At Kossova, the natural trysting

[1] *Vide* p. 356.

place and battle-lists for the nations between the Adriatic and the Euxine, Scanderbeg, from Albania, was to have joined with Hunyady. But he did not come; the year was wearing on, and Hunyady attacked without him. On St. Luke's Eve (17th Oct.) began a three days' battle; a harder one than even that which, sixty years before, had made the highland brook, that wanders through the "Ousel's field," run red with Ottoman and Sclavonian blood. The cavalry skirmishes of the first day, the fierce and earnest conflicts of the second, between Hunyady's skilfully divided and successively relieved squadrons, and Amurath's huge and storming masses, left the victory still to win: the German musketeers bravely kept the centre and key of the Christian line; the Janissaries, entrenched and immovable, were again the sure rallying point of the Turks. A night-attack failed against their composed and steady courage. The morrow of St. Luke found the battle still raging which had begun on the eve, but found discouragement in the Christian ranks. By the evening, Amurath had won his last and greatest victory. Once more Christian warriors had sold their brethren; once more the first of Christian captains had deserted his soldiers in the hour of disaster, and left them behind him, to find their own way from the field, or be slaughtered on it. The Wallachians had been bought, and had gone over to Amurath. Hunyady, at the last, led his Germans and his artillery to stop the Janissaries, and sheltered by the engagement,

escaped, and escaped with difficulty, through hostile Servia. The second Kossova decided between the Ottomans and the Hungarians,—as the first had done between the Ottomans and the Sclavonians,—who were to advance, and who to yield. Hunyady's valour was henceforth reserved for the defence of his country. Scanderbeg, who, if he had been waited for, might have turned the scale at Kossova, continued to maintain his freedom fiercely among the Illyrian precipices, and on his mountain eyrie of Croia;[1] but now the last struggle had been made, and henceforth the cause of Christendom was irretrievable, to the south of the Danube.

And the man who had carried through to its triumphant close this fateful conflict, who had won back for his house and race all that they had lost in Timour's victory, who had coped successfully with greater difficulties within, and more dangerous foes without, than his great conquering namesake, had, at forty years of age, become weary of his power, and longed for repose. A devotee in the view of Gibbon, a voluptuary in that of Von Hammer,—in reality, perhaps, both (for a life of easy and luxurious indulgence has often been no illegitimate accompaniment of Moslem devotion),—Amurath twice, with eager and hasty pertinacity, seized the occasion of apparent peace to relinquish the throne of Othman and Bajazet to a son of only fourteen years. The first time was when the oath of the King of Hungary seemed to

[1] See a sketch of Croia, in Lear's *Albania*, p. 116.

secure a ten years' truce with the only Christians whom he feared. He returned to conquer and to avenge. Then, from the bloody field of Varna, and the imperial state of Adrianople, he hastened away, the second time, to the unclouded Ionian skies, and the cypress groves and tulip gardens of Magnesia. With them he reserved to himself the revenues of Ionia and Caria. Of his favourite pleasance, the fragment of a wall, and few straggling cypresses still remain. Near them—with the mosques and baths, the madhouse and the almonry, the school and the caravanserai, which are the motley monuments of another Amurath's luxury and devotion at Magnesia—is a mausoleum with more than twenty tombs,—tombs of the youths and dames, it is said, who shared the retirement of the two sultans. But whether that of the conqueror of Varna was ascetic or voluptuous; whether he danced and howled with dervishes, or gave himself up to a soft and Epicurean ease, the Ottoman state soon needed again his experienced and vigorous hand. The first recorded mutiny of the Janissaries followed his abdication; the viziers of his son appeased it, and taught the soldiers their strength, by an increase of pay; and then earnestly entreated Amurath to return once more. A second time, within a year, he came back to the power, which he found that he could not abandon; and distaste or weariness did not abate the vigour and spirit with which he resumed the ambition and the policy of his race. His last years were at once his most glorious

ones, and his most chequered. He overran the Morea: he conquered at Kossova: he gave its last Greek emperor to Constantinople. But he, who had broken the might of kingdoms, was baffled and humbled, to the very day of his death, in a petty and protracted mountain war. He made no more obstinate efforts anywhere than he did to break or soften the spirit of Scanderbeg; he had never known such reverses as dogged his armies through the stern passes of Albania, and before the crags on which were perched its robber fastnesses. The last scene of a long and fortunate reign was his repulse, sick and heart-broken, from before the walls of Croia, into which his gold could not buy an entrance, and which the huge stone bullets, launched for the first time from Turkish cannons, could not shatter; and the envied and dreaded Amurath went back to die by a fit of apoplexy, at a banquet at Adrianople.

With him ended the first series of the Ottoman kings,—of those remarkable and persevering chiefs, who laid the foundations, and drew the plan, and prepared the power, of the Ottoman state. A little more than two years after Amurath's death, his son, a conqueror at twenty-three, rode through the broken wall to take possession of St. Sophia,—so ready was everything left to his hand; so successfully had his father and grandfather laboured to repair the ruins and efface the stain of Angora. With Mahomet the Conqueror, a change comes over the character of the Ottoman state and its rulers. The possession of the

centre of Eastern civilisation, instead of softening and taming them, corrupted and debased them. They retained and exaggerated the vices of their fathers; they lost, what appear at least at this distance of time, their nobler and more hopeful qualities. For, fierce and remorseless conquerors as they were, men of passion and men of blood, the earlier sultans yet exhibit a far higher stamp, both of intellect and of character, than is to be found, with perhaps one exception, in the long line which followed the Conqueror. They planned, they ruled, they fought in person, and not by the mind and hand of slaves. There appears in them a power of self-control and self-constraint, of patience and forbearance, which disappeared when their children found themselves in the palace of the Cæsars; and merciless as their wars were, we do not read, except in the instance of the massacre of Nicopolis, of those monstrous and wanton slaughters of helpless crowds, which marked the victories of Timour, and even the *civil* administration of the Ottomans of Constantinople. When Amurath II. gave Thessalonica to the spoiler, he forbade and prevented massacre.[1] Two points may be particularly observed, in which the earlier are strikingly contrasted with the later sultans. One is, the praise that is given to most of them for justice and consideration to their Greek subjects, by the Greek historians who wrote at the very time when they were destroying the Greek Empire. When all

[1] Von Hammer, i. 351.

abatements that may be necessary are made, these reports yet show a feeling on the subject which assuredly could seldom be found in later times. We are told of the strict impartiality of Othman's tribunal at Kara Hissar. We are told that under Orchan, the Greeks of Nicæa and Brusa preferred submitting to his rule, than passing over, as they might have done, to the dominions of the Christian Cæsar. Chalcocondylas compares the justice of the first Amurath to that of Cyrus, though the historian had suffered bitterly at his hands.[1] The united testimony of Ottomans and Byzantines bears witness to the humanity, the uprightness, the truthfulness and good faith, the gentleness, both to Greeks and Turks, of the first Mahomet. Ducas and Chalcocondylas both speak of the nobleness, justice and equity, of the redoubtable conqueror of Varna;[2] and perhaps he was the last of the sultans whose word was generally given in sincerity, and could be trusted without imprudence. The other point is, their relations to their own ministers and servants. Every one who has looked into later Ottoman history has been tormented by the confounding rapidity with which the names of the great men of the state are changed, or rather, what adds to the perplexity, with which the changes are rung on a very confined list of names. With a very few exceptions, no grand vizier, no general or admiral, stays long enough on the scene for the reader to fix and master a distinct image of

[1] Von Hammer, i. 180. [2] Idem, i. 351.

the man. In each case a slave has toiled up from the meanest condition, and often by the basest services; he appears for a moment on the pinnacle of power—for a moment the absolute disposer of life and of welfare, in the mightiest despotism of the world; his master's hand waves, and the head rolls; or the slave drops, without a murmur or a memorial, into the nameless herd from which he rose. But the names are few, and recur continually and for long spaces of time, of those who helped and served the early sultans. Their prolonged and unbroken service speaks of honour and attachment on the part of the master, as much as of loyalty in the dependant. They were vassals and liege men, not slaves. We do not find a single instance of capricious and sanguinary outbursts of displeasure against a great servant of the state, till the cruel and vindictive Mahomet the Conqueror. We hardly find till his day an instance of even a change or a disgrace. Great families grew up, and took root in the conquered provinces, from whom the chiefs of the army were taken, like the children of Evrenos in Macedonia, or Timurtash in Anatolia. There was even a strong tendency to hereditary office,—in some cases, apparently, even by special privilege. Out of the first six viziers of the Empire, one family, Black Halil's children, the Dchendereli, furnished four. The difference is perhaps made most palpable when we look at the lists, in Von Hammer's book, of the grand viziers and other great officers of the Empire.

In four centuries and a half, he enumerates one hundred and sixty-two grand viziers; of these the first six occupy more than the first of the centuries. The first six viziers served five sultans, till the reign of Mahomet the Conqueror. In the third year of his reign, the year of the taking of Constantinople, he put to death the vizier his father had left him, the namesake and descendant of Black Halil. In the thirty years of his reign six grand viziers were deposed,—exactly as many as had served his five predecessors during a space of a hundred and thirty years. The seventh was slain by the Janissaries. And the changes were equally rapid under the succeeding sultans.

Three times did Mahomet the Conqueror ascend the Ottoman throne. Twice he had resigned it, a sullen and reluctant boy of fourteen, whom it was necessary to inveigle out of the way, lest he should resist his father to his face, when, to save the state, he appeared to resume his abdicated power. The third time, seven years older, he sprang on the great prize with the eagerness and ferocity of a beast of prey. He never drew bridle from Magnesia, when he heard of his father's death, till on the second day he reached Gallipoli, on his way to Adrianople. To smother his infant brother in the bath was his first act of power; and then he turned, with all the force of his relentless and insatiate nature, to where the inheritor of what remained of the greatness of the Cæsars—leisurely arranging marriages and embas-

sies—still detained from the Moslems the first city of the East;—little knowing the savage eye that was fixed upon him, little suspecting the nearness of a doom, which had so often threatened and had been so often averted.

For a hundred and fifty years the Ottomans had marked Constantinople for their own, and had waited. Long had been the waiting. Rapidly, and in hot and urgent haste, did the end arrive at last. All was at first peace and amity between the Ottoman and the Greek. The Greek even presumed to be the first to menace: the grand vizier, the friend of the Greeks, warned them of their madness in rousing the tiger before the time; but the words of Mahomet were still grave and courteous. The first year of his reign was almost over, and yet no signs were apparent to the Greeks of the fate which was drawing near. But in the winter, the tidings came to Constantine that the Ottomans purposed to build a castle on the European shore of the Bosporus, at its narrowest interval, and corresponding to one already built in Asia; that the site had been chosen at five miles' distance from Constantinople, and the materials collected. Constantine remonstrated, but vainly. "No," said the Ottoman, "he meant nothing against Constantinople; but he should build on his own ground, for his own purposes; and the next messenger who dared to interfere should be flayed alive!" The announcement and the message revealed to Constantine the greatness of the crisis;

but not to his people. He would have drawn the sword, but they refused. "Amid hope and fear, the fears of the wise and the hopes of the credulous, the winter rolled away," while Mahomet was burning his lime, and felling his timber, and quarrying his stone, to be ready for the first days of spring. Spring came, and with it his busy masons and zealous officers; and the summer saw the Bosporus commanded by a new Turkish castle, bearing, in its fantastic outline,[1] an augury and a memorial of the man and the faith which were henceforth to reign along those shores. Still Mahomet spoke not of conquest; but he pulled down churches to build his towers, and his soldiers turned their horses into the corn-fields under the walls of Constantinople, and slaughtered the peasants when they resisted. And he himself was eagerly and curiously questioning the cunning Hungarian engineer, whom the niggardness of the Greek arsenal had driven over to the Ottomans, about the powers of his art; and whether he could cast a cannon whose stroke should shatter the walls of Constantinople. "Of Constantinople or of Babylon!" answered the craftsman. His cannon was cast; a Venetian galley, whose topsail was not lowered to Mahomet's castle, was sunk to try its range, and the survivors from the wreck impaled or beheaded, as

[1] The outline of the walls was made to imitate the Arabic letters of the name of *Mohammed*. The three Ms, a round character in Arabic, were represented by three towers at unequal distances.

an earnest of the purposes for which the cannon was destined, and the mind of its employer towards the Christians. Winter came on again, the second winter. The foundry of the Hungarian engineer was kept in full work. The hugest cannon that had yet been imagined or cast, issued from his moulds, and Adrianople was terrified by its explosion when it was tested. As the time drew on a fierce and savage impatience took possession of the terrible young man, who was preparing to seize what the greatest of his fathers had vainly longed for. He pried with feverish and dangerous suspicion into the thoughts and wishes of his soldiers and ministers. "Give me Constantinople; that is all I require of thee," was his ejaculation to his grand vizier, whom he had summoned in the restlessness of a sleepless night, to warn him not to be drawn away, as his father and his grandfather had been, by the bribes of the Greeks. So the winter passed with Mahomet, in anxious excitement, but in diligent and careful preparation. In Constantinople it passed, the last winter of the Christian Empire, in dull and sluggish expectancy of evil,—deepened by the gloom of dismal prophecies, which were repeated more frequently and more confidently,—disturbed only by furious quarrels of which religion was the watchword,—enlightened by scarcely a gleam of hopefulness, of self-reliance, of purpose. The Emperor, in the maddening extremity of his helplessness, had consented once more to the submission, which the pride of the

Popes was content to exact, from those who only gave it in distress, and never with sincerity. The Emperor had consented, but not the people of Constantinople. The Roman union was celebrated in St. Sophia, but cursed in the streets and convents of the city. Christmas and Lent and Easter were spent in the bitterness of party war, which avowed its preference for the Moslem turban over the cardinal's hat. And on the Friday after Easter, 1453, the Moslem appeared before the city, to take the boasters at their word, and to still the feuds of the two Churches in a common destruction.

Christendom was cold. The Pope, in spite of the submission of the Emperor, was offended and suspicious. In Constantinople itself, Constantine had made a muster of those who were willing and able to stand by him for their homes and churches. Out of that great city—the number has been preserved—they amounted to four thousand, nine hundred, and seventy-one! Those who defended Constantinople were not its own children, but foreign merchants and foreign adventurers. Out of the twelve posts of consequence around its walls, two only were held by Greeks; the other ten were commanded by Spanish, Italian, and German officers. To the last hour of the Greek Empire, it was Christians who betrayed the cause of Christendom. While the flower of that mighty and enthusiastic host, which their determined and remorseless master had gathered round the walls, had been won from Christendom, "while the greatest

part of Mahomet's pashas and Janissaries were the offspring of Christian parents," Christians, who had their faith and their liberty to save, hung back, and refused to fight in company. The Genoese traders of Galata were bargaining for themselves with Mahomet, in the very height and crisis of the siege; and looked on without molesting him, when he dragged his barks under their fortifications from the Bosporus to the harbour. It was a Christian engineer who gave Mahomet his artillery—but he was, perhaps, only a dull craftsman working for his bread; it was a Christian ambassador in the camp of Mahomet, the ambassador of the great Hunyady, who instructed the awkward artillerymen how to breach the rampart.

It is some relief in this oppressive spectacle of blindness, of baseness, and of decay, to rest our eyes on the imperfect virtue and desolate end of the last Constantine. A brave man in a herd of cowards, yet even he did not deserve to save Constantinople; for he had sold his conscience and outraged his people by purchasing the niggard aid of the Latins at the price of the humiliation of the Eastern Church. But he, at least, had taken his resolution to endure even to death, and that gave him nobleness. He calmly bore the insults of the fanatic and dastardly populace in the streets, who remembered only that he had suffered a Roman legate to profane by the Western ritual the altar of St. Sophia, and hooted him, while he was toiling against hope to save them. Then, when all was done,—when, in spite of all, the Turks

were in the harbour, and the walls had crumbled beneath their cannon; when the great breach was now ready at the gate of St. Romanus, and the last sun had set on an empire of eleven hundred years,—he prepared to die, as one who bore the name and the crown of him who had been the first of Christian kings. All Christmas time, all Lent, all Eastertide, there had been emptiness and solitude under the mighty dome of Justinian; since the Latin prelate had been there, the crowds of Greek worshippers had forsaken it, as delivered over to demons. Its midnight gloom was the fit refuge for a deserted emperor, when his soul came to seek for the last mournful moments of peace. All round the city, from the heights of Galata, along the bridge across the harbour, and in front of the city walls to the shore of the Propontis, a dazzling blaze of illumination lighted up the Turkish lines; in the camp, and on the sea, festive lamps were hung out on tent, and mast, and yard-arm, and the shouts of exulting multitudes, proclaiming the greatness of the false prophet, and the victory of the morrow, rose fierce and wild on all sides through the night, while the last rite that Christians were to perform in St. Sophia was celebrated, the midnight communion of its doomed emperor. Humbled and meek in his fortitude, he earnestly craved, as his last request, the forgiveness of those from whom he was parting. Dawn found him in the breach, breasting the destroying storm. He bore up while the Genoese captain, Giustiniani, who had fought with him through

the siege, remained by his side. He might, perhaps, have borne up successfully, but Giustiniani was at length wounded; whether from the agony of his wound, or as others thought, from a despair which he could control no longer, the gallantest of the Italian captains left the breach; and when the stranger forsook him, Constantine sunk beneath his fate: 29th May 1453. He perished, unrecognised, by an unknown hand. A few hours afterwards, Mahomet rode through the gate, in which the heaps of corpses showed where the last fierce struggle for the perishing empire had taken place, and knew not that the Cæsar's was among them. It was found before evening; and, for the second time within ten years, the head of a Christian king was borne on a pike through the camp of the Ottomans.

The great capital city of the East had fallen, and both Greeks and Latins were alarmed, and mourned its fall. But it had changed owners before; and neither were at once alive to the full significance of *this* change to the history of the world. Neither suspected what strong and what cruel masters had come to take possession of the desolate palaces where the spider had long stretched her web,[1] and to fill once more, for centuries, their vast and echoing emptiness with the crowds of a gorgeous court. Mahomet declared himself the protector of the Greeks of Constantinople. The new patriarch, he who had

[1] See the Persian verses repeated by Mahomet. Gibbon, viii. 256.

inveighed so fiercely against the Latin union and the compliances of Constantine, received his jewelled crozier from the hand of the infidel, according to the old ceremonial of the Byzantine court; paid him the same homage, received the same honours as had accompanied the investiture of his predecessors under Christian emperors. But in time the waste streets of Constantinople became peopled with new inhabitants from distant and strange regions. Where the venerable palace of Bucoleon had stood, the new Seraglio began to crown the promontory of the Golden Horn; the Mosque of the Conqueror rose on the ruins of the Church of the Holy Apostles, and the tombs of the Cæsars; and the Greeks were reminded that in Constantinople they were in a capital which was not their own. And very soon too the massacre of their noblest, and the dishonour of their fairest, told them more terribly what a change had come in the place of the dull and oppressive, yet not sanguinary, Byzantine rule. Then they began to see what was meant by the settlement of the Ottomans at Constantinople; and Europe soon saw it too. The conquering fury of the Ottomans burst forth with new and consuming force along all its old tracks; Austria and Hungary felt its desolations renewed again and again, though it broke it in vain against the walls of Belgrade: it drove Scanderbeg from the haunts to which he clung so fiercely, to die before he could be conquered; in Europe, Albania, Bosnia, and Peloponnesus—in Asia, Karamania, and the Christian

kingdom of Trebizond, sank finally under its strength. But this was not all. Lords of the Bosporus, the Ottomans from this time, began to claim the seas, as they had subdued the lands. Mahomet was the first builder of an Ottoman fleet, and he lived to see its power. It gave him Negropont and the Archipelago; then it destroyed the settlement of the Genoese at Kaffa, and explored the sea of Azoff, and the mouths of the Don, and the Danube; and from Kilia and Akerman, from the Crimea and Trebizond, the Ottomans were masters of the Black Sea. First of the European states, the Signory of Venice understood the great revolution in the East, and measured its danger. From the time of Mahomet II. no state recognised the importance of the Ottomans so clearly, or had such continual relations with them, both in peace and war, as Venice. Her keen-sighted envoys soon discovered how firmly the Ottoman power was fixed at Constantinople; how, under its remorseless and able chief, it was becoming consolidated and organised into a strong and enduring engine of conquest. Her own fierce wars and chequered negotiations with her new rival at once began, to last till both Venice and the sultans were exhausted. And she had early and ample confirmation of her forebodings. In a few years the Ottoman conquests had reached to the shores of her own Adriatic; their fleets had conquered Zante and Cephalonia, had crossed the Ionian Sea and sacked Otranto. And while the entrance of the jealously-guarded Gulf was

bordered by a Turkish coast, and threatened by Turkish fleets, the Turkish horsemen had found their way through Dalmatia and Friuli, across the rivers which pour into it at its head; and before the end of Mahomet's reign, the watch-fires and the burnings of the Ottoman ravagers had been descried from the steeples of the Lagunes.

The chronology of the Ottoman chiefs to Mahomet II. is as follows:—

Othman, 1288–1325.
Orchan, 1325–1359.
Amurath I., 1359–1389.
Bajazet, 1389–1403.
Mahomet I., 1413–1421.
Amurath II., 1421–1451.
Mahomet II., 1451–1481.

Othman, Orchan, and Amurath I. styled themselves *Emirs*. The title of *Sultan* is said to have been first taken by Bajazet; but Mahomet II. still called himself, also, the Great Emir. His style in the capitulation of Galata, 1453, is—ὁ μέγας Αὐθέντης, καὶ μέγας Ἀμυρᾶς Σουλτάνος ὁ Μεχμὲτ Μπέης, κ.τ.λ.—Von Hammer (Hellert), ii. 523.

END OF VOL. I

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